

*GREEN  
ENVELOPES*

52114

## GREEN ENVELOPES

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1. The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the English language. It discusses the various factors which have influenced the development of the language, such as the contact with other languages, the internal changes, and the influence of the social and cultural environment.

2. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the phonetic changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of sound change, such as the Great Vowel Shift, the Great Consonant Shift, and the Great Diphthong Shift.

3. The third part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the morphological changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of morphological change, such as the loss of inflections, the development of new inflections, and the development of new grammatical constructions.

4. The fourth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the syntactic changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of syntactic change, such as the development of new sentence structures, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.

5. The fifth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the semantic changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of semantic change, such as the development of new meanings for old words, the development of new words, and the development of new grammatical constructions.

6. The sixth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the stylistic changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of stylistic change, such as the development of new literary styles, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.

7. The seventh part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the sociolinguistic changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of sociolinguistic change, such as the development of new social dialects, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.

8. The eighth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the historical changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of historical change, such as the development of new historical periods, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.

9. The ninth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the future changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of future change, such as the development of new future periods, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.

10. The tenth part of the book is devoted to a detailed study of the present changes which have taken place in the history of the English language. It discusses the various processes of present change, such as the development of new present periods, the development of new grammatical constructions, and the development of new grammatical rules.



## INTRODUCTION

I AM indebted to my amiable cousin the late Miss Amy Bailey for this series of very human documents. I have linked them together to form the mental picture that has done so much to relieve the monotony of my struggle back to what, for me, is to be the nearest approach that I can attain to bodily health. I was unfortunate enough to be severely shattered in the first battle of Ypres. My wounds were so severe that almost to the end of the War I was little better than a lying-down case.

Amy Bailey was one of those good souls who had devoted her time and her energy, which latter appeared to be inexhaustible, to administering to the wants and comfort of others. In the fervour of the early days of the War, when the manhood of the little village in which she lived was swept into the vortex of the struggle, and almost without exception either belonged to, or enlisted in,

the Yeomanry Regiment that had its Peace head-quarters in the locality, Amy Bailey, I suspect with the concurrence of others in the neighbourhood, conceived the original and rather pretty idea of collecting as many as possible of the letters that came to the village from the Front. She typed copies of those that were loaned to her for the purpose, with the intention of making, in Album form, a complete record of the village's participation in those stirring times.

During one of the kindly visits that Amy made me when I was in Hospital, and when I was deploring the boredom of my miserable life and the insufficiency of news in the papers, she told me of the interesting collection of letters upon which she had engaged. She was so enthusiastic about their contents that she offered me a copy of those already in her possession, and also promised to send me a duplicate of all others that she might be able to secure. Amy Bailey was most assiduous in amassing these letters, and she supplied me with a constant stream of copies, so that the following of this one-way correspondence became the chief pleasure of my otherwise empty life.

Amy Bailey was only a distant cousin. I had never seen her home in Dragget, and, poignantly enough, I was never destined to be either her or her elder sister's guest there. Poor Amy, her constitution no doubt weakened by the strenuous duties she had imposed upon herself, in her conception of a woman's duty in time of national emergency, became a victim to the epidemic of "Spanish Influenza" which swept Europe in 1918. Her elder sister, who was somewhat of an invalid, found it more amenable to her comfort to leave Dragget, and to remove to London.

Except for some rather inconclusive descriptions of one or two of the persons who were authors of some of the letters, which Amy Bailey gave me during her original visit to me, I had no knowledge either of the writers or of the locality to which the letters were addressed. Further personal elucidation became impossible, as I was transferred to a Convalescent Hospital, too far distant from her home for Amy to visit me.

Perhaps it was better thus, as personal connection might have disturbed the splendid path upon which imagination allowed me to travel. The subject certainly caught a vivid

hold upon my mind, while a creative occupation proved a welcome sedative to my pain-racked frame. I began to live amongst these people, the atmosphere of whose lives was disclosed to me week by week. As will be seen, the letters grew into many pages. To me, a semi-paralysed soldier, the subject-matter was entrancing. It laid bare the souls of all classes: it revealed a phase of English life that was hitherto unknown to me.

I discovered therein the beauty of a feudal system that, properly applied, has made more for human happiness than can ever result from the chimera of socialistic endeavour. I saw the beauties of married life in its most difficult form, and under the most appalling stresses. I saw it, and was impelled to admire it, both in the Mansion and in the Cottage. To me were revealed, stripped of all affectation, the loves of the aged and the loves of the young: the valour of the soldier, physical and moral. In a word, I had discovered the sources of the spirit of the nation. The whole project so possessed me that I became, as it were, a member of the community whose innermost secrets had come into my possession. For ten years, ten very long and tedious years for

me, a hopeless cripple, I have treasured "my picture." Now I have determined to unveil it to the public view.

The whole story is such a beautiful story, and after the World War, such a general story, and one so redolent of the sterling qualities of our race, that I feel that its publication can do nothing but good.

I have, however, used a nomenclature that is fictitious. I have deleted all dates, and as many indications of places that could in any way lead to personal identity. It is, therefore, only an original picture, and in no wise a facsimile. Englishmen, I hope, who may read these letters, will glow with pride. There can be no hurt in the sentiments, however intimate, expressed by a gallant father, brother, or husband to those who are dearest to them, provided the origin and destination of the missives be not localized.

My defence, if one be needed, against any charge of ill-taste or breach of trust, is that the sentiments expressed in this series of letters from fighting men at the Front, are, taken as a whole, so noble, so inspiring, so wholesome, and so redolent of all that is greatest in our manhood, that to withhold them would



be refusing to the rising generation an inspiration that, on the score of national policy alone, is of some importance.

I do not believe that in one single instance I will have caused any individual a moment's pain. If I have, it has not been intentional, as I have spent many months in careful scrutiny and selection with this very object always before me.

Many of the letters from which the final selection has been made, naturally, are very illiterate and misspelt. I have considered it better, in order to make the reading of them easier, to give them with the spelling improved. But I have endeavoured to leave the loose phraseology, a course which seems to me to give the proper character to letters of this type.

## I

*From Trooper Jock Jagers (the Colonel's Groom)  
to Miss May (Dovey) Tickner (Housemaid at  
Dragget Hall).*

DEAR DOVEY,—

I hope that this finds you as it leaves me. In the pink. We are now back for training. This is a nice village. The Head Quarters are in the Chateau. Nice for us chaps on Head Quarters as we have got a nice out-house for our billet, that is Billy and me. Don't tell Miss Martha, but Billy is that saucy that he don't half set the french village girls alight. He speaks about ten words of their *bat*<sup>1</sup> and he do make them go a long way. Some chaps are so pushing. The squire is fair busting himself because the general said that he had got his horses looking better than

<sup>1</sup> Language = soldier's colloquialism acquired from the Hindustani.

anybody else. You might tell Mrs. Mustard that Charles is head quarters cook now they have made him a lance-jack and he don't half fancy himself, but Oddy, that's the old man's batman, as does not come from our parts, so you won't know who he is, says that he heard the adjutant say that Charles couldn't cook potatoes for nuts. I can't write much more, Dovey, because the candles about done, but I send you a proper squeeze and it won't be long before my turn comes for a bit of "leaf" and that's going to mean a bit of cuddle for you old thing. I got the "cigs" alright give my best respects to Mrs. Mustard tell Mr. Birkett that my two horses looks a treat. He wouldn't be ashamed to see the Colonel on parade. Mr. Plimsol has transfered to the A.S.C. he could make nothing of a rifle, so the old man said he had better drive a lorry. But I expect Mrs. P. has already told you. Mr. Pedlar that has been away for some weeks has come back a signalling officer. Seems funny that he should be grubbing with the Squire and being waited on by Burge and Charles, especially as Charles was running him close with that schoolmarm of his but I see some letters that Joe Buck—

as is post orderly—took and Mr. Pedlar is writing to that fairhaired Miss Loder, that's one good thing of being an officer you can censor your own letters, but this comes to you, Dovey, in a green envelope so I can say just what I feel with no Regimental Paul Pry putting his nose in, so just you think we are in Balls Wood a sitting on the sunk fence among the bluebells and that we are cuddling. That's what I am going to sleep thinking. (The rest of the sheet was a mass of crosses denoting affection.)

## 2

*Rev. Walter Walsingham (Army Chaplain) to  
the Reverend Hubert Birtwistle (Vicar of  
Dragget).*

MY VERY DEAR VICAR,—

I am sitting down in the Church Army Hut to write you a really long and newsful letter. My Division has fortunately come into the Corps in which our Yeomanry Regiment is the

Corps Cavalry. It was quite like being back at home to see all our friends again. The Squire is on the way to make a great name for himself. I saw Major Agular the other day. He, as you know, is on the staff of our Corps, and he said that "Our" Regiment did ever so well in its last operation. But unfortunately it had the casualties of which you know. For this the Squire got his D.S.O. But this I expect you know already. First I must tell you about young Reggie Sparling. He has come out from the O.T.C. and is a subaltern in the Squire's Regiment and promises to make a first class officer. I dined with the Squire last night. His headquarters are in a fine old Chateau. He has just appointed Mr. Melrose, of Ivybanks, to be his adjutant, and he says that the latter is to the manner born. Somehow one never imagined that quiet retiring man as possessing a genius for soldiering. He was so reserved that really we in the village never really knew him, and then of course he was not a noticeably good churchman, which was always a sort of bar between us. Active service, however, breaks down many of our conventions, and makes one see many things in a totally



different light. But I wish that so excellent a soldier, as Mr. Melrose has proved, had been nearer to us in the old days.

Young Pedlar who was in the choir, is also one of the finds of the War, and is the Squire's signalling officer. It is hard to visualize in this smart young officer, he gained a M.M. when in the ranks, the polite and prompt young grocer's assistant that has served us for the last few years.

All the other officers on the Squire's headquarters were strangers to me: but I found many of our friends among the rank and file. Charles the footman at Dragget Hall is the cook, Jack Burge the underkeeper, is the Mess Waiter, while Dan your gardener, is H.Q. Sergeant. You might tell Mrs. Sabey that her Dan was looking very fine and well. Naturally finding the Regiment in my own sphere so to speak, I have spent a great deal of time amongst our more humble parishioners. There is, however, one thing that is somewhat distressing me. I would crave, my dear Vicar, that you give me your advice. Of course you are aware that there are many unusual temptations that present themselves to soldiers in a campaign such as this one.

We must of course make all allowances for the frailty of human nature, and the exceptional reaction that besets men after they have been in close contact with the more brutal side of war, and have been so long and far removed from the feminine influences of their own home surroundings. But I am afraid that the morality of French women in the back areas, is somewhat lax. We have to look these facts in the face. One has to admit that temptation is prevalent in a somewhat exaggerated form. It is an important part of my duties to combat this. Last night at the Squire's table this very serious matter was touched upon, and the Squire in the dogmatic and downright way that you know so well, expressed himself very freely. He said that in his orders he had warned his Regiment that it was a national duty, before all other duties, that his officers and men should keep themselves, as far as their own efforts could succeed, absolutely fit and well. Therefore he would treat any illness traceable to a direct disobedience of this order as a "military crime" and punish it as such accordingly. But, that realizing the physical side of the matter, he had through

his Canteen, made it possible for every officer and man to eliminate danger in the matter without incurring any personal expense. Here is my quandary. This action of the Squire is a direct incentive to evil doing. In short it is an encouragement. The Squire has no right to treat this matter as a military crime. A senior authority, if it knew, might easily fall upon him with the weight of a ton of bricks. Might even wreck his military career. What then is my duty? As a parson it should be my endeavour to eliminate any encouragement to what we know to be a deadly sin. As a soldier I understand the Squire's argument as to the duty of a fighting man preserving his fitness. It is a delicate dilemma. I have the greatest admiration for the Squire. He has always at home been most kind and hospitable to me. I think you must have been aware of the special attraction that Miss Dalgety has for me. The Squire is a good churchman. But at the moment he is a vigorous, unrelenting soldier, and patriot first. That is why I have written to you, my dear Vicar, at such length. Perhaps in your wisdom you will be able to advise me as to the path of duty that I should tread.

Tentatively, when I met Major Agular at Corps Headquarters, I put a problematical case to him, of course in a general sense only. He is a rising young staff officer. He is G.S.O.,. He treated the matter very lightly. "Padre" he said. "It is hardly your affair. A C.O. can issue what comforts to his men he likes as a free issue. The remedy for an unlawful award by their C.O. is in the men's own hands. No man need accept an award from his C.O. he can always have his case sent to a court-martial." It is difficult to make a soldier understand the moral responsibilities that dog the steps of a priest.

Dear Vicar, please give my affectionate duty, to your dear wife, and thank her again, for the most welcome parcel that she sent me. She seems to possess a genius for selecting in her presents the things that one most wants.

Ever yours devotedly,

WALTER WALSINGHAM.

P.S. By the way that weird Mr. Delamain of "the Grange" is a trooper in the Regiment. I met him in the lines and had a talk with him. I suggested that a man of his means and education should be an officer. He replied that he would make a better officer if he learned

to be a soldier first. It certainly was incongruous to see him in his campaign-soiled karki with a mess tin full of the most unpalatable looking stew. The last time I had seen him he had given me a lift in his Rolls Royce car when I was trudging back from that poor Mrs. Symond's death bed.

## 3

*From Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Miss Frances Dalgety.*

Somewhere in France.

DEAR FRANKIE,—

Just a line so that you will not think I have forgotten my restless little daughter. I will be perfectly frank with you about the proposal you made in your last letter. I don't like the idea at all. You are doing all the good that a small person of your age and position can do for the common welfare, in working at the local hospital and looking after Fred Finch and the hounds. Whatever you do



at the hospital is your "military bit" and what you do in keeping the hounds going is also a national service. If this war is going on for another three or four years, and foxes are not kept down, it will end in there being so many foxes that it will be impossible to hunt them—or they will themselves hunt hounds—but seriously, I would not like you to come over here to drive an ambulance. My reasons are as follows. You are passing young, and somewhat wanting—not in pluck—but in experience to have to face the rough of it. I should not be easily accessible. In fact, situated as I am as a Regimental Officer, I would really be further away from you, if you were at the Base in France, than I am when you are at home. Remember that you are all that I have got, and I should be worrying about you and I have enough to worry about without the addition of a very close personal worry. That's that from the parental point of view and from the M.F.H. point of view, I say that the Kennels cannot get on without you. Old Fred Finch is sterling enough: but he is no use on his own. He must have some one to refer to, some one whose opinion he respects. He respects me, and conse-

quently, as he reckons that you are part of me, he respects you also. Seriously Frank, if you take the bit in your teeth and leave home, I shall have no alternative, much as I hate the thought even of it, but to put the hounds down. Even you yourself must realize that such a calamity must be avoided at all costs.

By the way, that young curate of yours, Walsingham, is attached to a Division that has come into our Corps. He came to dine the other night. The War has done him no good. He has developed a particularly pestilential type of swelled head, and, because he is in the understrappers mess of the Division apes the staff officer with superior knowledge. If he had not been a guest, I would have told him off. There is nothing quite so fatuous, as when an ignorant ass tries to qualify some inane assertion with "I can assure you that that is not the opinion of the Division." If I had my way all parsons under forty should be unfrocked and put into the ranks.

I would like you, Frank, to see as much as you can of Mrs. Melrose. I have taken Melrose on as Adjutant in place of Peter Pettigrew. Peter has got his Squadron in

his own Regiment so he had to go back to it. But before he left he told me that Melrose would make a good Adjutant, and so he does. He is quiet, very thorough, and throws his weight—or rather my weight about with the Squadron leaders. They I think are the most surprised people about Melrose. Anyway he looks as if he is going to turn out a topper so I would like you to be nice to his wife. She must be a bit lonely. I hardly knew them before the War; but I remember meeting her once or twice and I thought her a nice little woman and I was sorry that they did not hunt or shoot.

Tell old Banister that Charles is now Headquarters cook and a Lance-Corporal.

Lots of love, Frank, and don't do anything foolish about this Ambulance driving. Love to your Aunt Bessie.

Ever your affectionate Father

JOHN J. DALGETY.

P.S. Young Pedlar is now my signalling officer. He is a good lad: one of nature's gentlemen.

## 4

*From Lance-Corporal Charles Collins (Footman at Dragget Hall) to Miss Dalgety (the Squire's Sister).*

DEAR MA'AM,—

You told me to write to you and let you know how I and the Master was getting on. I am quite comfortable thank you and am now Headquarters Mess Cook and I can scramble eggs—when we can get them which is not often—just as the Master likes them. Would you ask Mrs. Mustard to jot down some recipes for me of simple ways to cook beef and how to make some sweets as do not want too many eggs. I am rather a dud at sweets. The Master is very well. They do say that he is the best Colonel in the Army: but he smokes too many fags and snores something terrific if he happens to go to sleep on his back. I would like some napkins and dishcloths if there are any to spare at the Hall. Also a few roller towels. Me and Jock Jaggers from the Kennels have fitted up the Messcart with wooden drawers and trays. Mr. Pedlar, that was before Tom

Pedlar the grocer's lad, and is now one of our officers, helped us. In fact it was his idea, as he knew all about storing groceries and is Mess President. He is not a bit stuck-up with it all, and when we ain't parading he just calls us Charlie and Jock, like as he did when we were all playing football together, but of course we don't call him Tom—at least to his face that is—we call him Mr. Pedlar now. Hoping Ma'am that the parrot and the peek are well and that this will find you as it leaves me in the best of health

Yours respectfully

CHARLES COLLINS

Lance-Corporal.

5

*From Private Hugh Bickford (Schoolmaster,  
Dragget Village) to Miss Amy Bailey.*

DEAR MISS BAILEY,—

I have at last some good news to tell you regarding myself. I am to come home any



day now as the Colonel has recommended me at last to go to a Cadet School. I should really have been an officer long ago, but as I have already suggested to you, I made a mistake, during the intoxication by War-fever, that took us in the early days, in enlisting in a local unit. Sergeant Majors and Sergeants have long memories and my vigorous denunciation of Fox Hunting and my open avowal of Socialistic leanings, has been, in this cradle of Feudalism that I now find myself, not only a handicap to me but a positive danger. When the War-fever and the novelty of the practice of arms wore off, I speedily saw the mistake I had made. Colonel of the Regiment, Master of Fox Hounds; my Squadron Commander a Member of the Hunt Committee; my Troop leader Secretary of the Hunt; my Squadron Sergeant Major the Kennel Huntsman, and my Troop Sergeant the First Whip. I foolishly thought that all our differences of outlook and opinion would have been forgotten in the common impulse of self protection which is what War-fever boils down to. But not a bit of it. As I said before Sergeant Majors and Sergeants have long memories. They had not forgotten that

piece of poetry of mine in the local paper. It was that I think that really stuck. I expect you will remember it, Miss Bailey, the piece about the "Phantom Fox"—it was called "the Biter Bit."

Well, Miss Bailey, there is little justice in the world, and certainly none in the Army. A private soldier that has one or more non-coms, waiting for him, with half his comrades sympathizing with them and with the officers backing them cannot last long without getting into trouble. Any way I was very soon tripped up and I narrowly escaped being courtmartialled. I cannot yet quite understand why the Colonel did not send me to a courtmartial, the offence that I was charged with—and which of course I had not committed—at least not in the aggravated form of the charge—was not one that a C.O. has authority to deal with. I know enough of King's Regulations to realize that. When he had heard all the evidence, he said to me "What have you to say Bickford?"

I replied "Sir, the evidence is about 5 per cent true only."

The Squire looked at me hard for a moment then he took his pen and altered the charge

on the charge sheet. He made it into one that he could deal with himself and he prefaced his award by quoting the last line of my poem about giving the quarry a sporting chance.

But of course it delayed my recommendation for promotion, and it has been rather galling to see young upstarts from the village, men practically devoid of education like young Pedlar coming out as officers, giving themselves airs and strutting about in public places in order to make their late comrades endure the ignominy of saluting them.

I was most interested in your last letter. It was so full of news, just the intimate news that we here in France are thirsting for. I never did think much of that man Bassett; it is the way with Gentlemen Farmers, if they are any good the Yeomen Farmers love them: if the Yeomen don't like them, then you may wager, that they are rotters. Bassett has no excuse. What of it if he has two farms to look after, he could surely find some one to do that for him and not skrimshank from doing his bit out here. Why he is barely past thirty. Just fancy his having the audacity to set his cap at Miss

Dalgety—that is flying high. The Squire wouldn't stand for that if he were at home. But I suppose it is a case of "when the cat's away." You do not say if his advances are reciprocated. Somehow I cannot imagine a high spirited young lady like the Squire's daughter ever taking notice of a man who ought to be at the front out here. I suppose it is the hounds and the horses that bring them together. So two of Farmer Loder's girls have gone off to be nurses. I am glad that Miss Sally has stayed at home. I think I told you that Mr. Delamain of the Grange is in my troop. He is not in my section, but nevertheless I see a lot of him. I must say that I don't understand him. He is the most silent man I have ever met: but he is always having parcels of books sent out to him, which he passes round, but they are too high-brow for the majority. He ought to be an officer, but he does not want to be one, nor even a sergeant. He is a corporal. Everyone has a great respect for him. When he was promoted full Corporal he came to us from "B" Squadron. He was posted to a real rough section in our Troop. Real tough customers: not from our part of the world.

When he joined this section as section leader, he told one of the section to do something. The man replied "Do it yourself, don't you think you are going to come the —— officer over us!" Delamain replied "Just come here, Digger," the man's name was Digger, "and take your coat off." In less time than it takes in the telling Digger was lying unconscious on his back. The other two fell into line as meek as lambs after that. Delamain now has the smartest section in the Squadron.

What a lot I have written Miss Bailey, but it is such a relief to be able to write to you so openly, I have not many people in this world. Your letters too, are so informing, and bring back memories of the happy times we have had at home. I write regularly to Miss Mettle, but the fair Imogen is not what I would call an illuminating correspondent. She is punctilious it is true, in the answering of my letters, but she still only views me as her superior on holiday. I have to own that this War has broadened my outlook, and, at the moment everything that appertains to the life of a village schoolmaster is unattractive to me. I never want to see a blackboard or smudged faces again. But Imogen Mettle's

letters contain nothing but references to her various pupils. I have distributed the parcel of *Times* broadsheets that you so kindly sent me. You would be surprised how they are appreciated. With kind remembrances to Miss Constance, and my best wishes to yourself

I remain  
Yours sincerely,  
HUGH BICKFORD.

No. 14468.

P.S. I enclose a 10s. note. Would you of your kindness buy a box of chocolates and send them over to Miss Mettle and say they are from "a boy doing his bit at the front."

6

*Captain and Adjutant David Melrose to his  
Wife, Millicent, at "Ivybanks," Dragget.*

MY OWN DEAR MILLY,—

Your own sweet letter with the snapshot of little Milly arrived safely this morning.

Thank you for both, darling. The child is perfectly sweet. How could she be otherwise since she is your daughter. I can see, especially about the eyes, a wonderful likeness to your dear self, especially to you when your face is in repose. How perfectly fascinating the wee mite must be. What a tragedy this War is, that it keeps me from sharing with you the joy of being with her. Let us hope that it will soon be over, there are rumours of peace negotiations through the American President's intercession. Please God they may materialize and that soon I may be back with you at "Ivybanks" and that we may never be parted again. The whole thing is hideous and I shall return a confirmed pacifist. You need not worry your little head about me. Now that I am adjutant I am in a much safer position than I was when I was just a Troop officer. No more officers' patrols for me: no more exposure in the trenches, when we are sent up to relieve the Infantry. You may congratulate yourself, darling, that I did not join up as an Infantryman. By far the hardest part of the War falls upon the junior Infantry officers. They fill me with admiration. Theirs is a life of sustained gallantry with the



certain knowledge that they will be hit, within a period of days that can almost be specified. Yet they cannot for one moment let their courage wilt, as the men are so observant in this matter, and their life in the trenches is identical with that of the men.

I think that the Squire is satisfied with me as Adjutant. It is really quite easy for me, since the Squire's six years as a Dragoon Subaltern makes him now a very competent C.O. He is a big minded man and does not worry much about detail. That is what I am for. I found two of the Squadron leaders a little difficult. I think they rather resent a junior Subaltern, and a civilian recently converted into a soldier, being the C.O.'s mouthpiece. One of them in a fit of spleen ordered me out of his lines. I don't think that this will happen again. The C.O. wasn't even rough with him. I wasn't present at the interview, but I never heard the Squire's voice raised in anger, but what he said evidently went home, as the Major came in and apologized to me and was ever so nice about it.

We had an amusing incident yesterday. We have a new D.D.M.S. (Director of Medical

Services) at the Corps. D.D.M.S.s, like Sappers, always have some particular madness. This one's special weakness lies in cook houses and cleanliness. He blew in unannounced to see our Cook houses, and was dismayed, grieved and shocked to find that the Squadron Cooks had no clean white linen overalls. He turned to the Squire and said "Colonel, your cooks should have white overalls."

"Are they a necessity?" was the C.O.'s mild reply.

"Certainly!" said the Big Noise Doctor.

The C.O. turned to me and said "Melrose, why have you not indented for Cooks' suitings? Indent for them at once!"

"They are not an official issue," said the D.D.M.S. "You will have to purchase them out of the Canteen Funds."

"But you said they were a necessity!" said the Squire.

"Of course I did," replied the D.D.M.S.

"Then," answered the Squire, "they should be an official issue. I have no authority to spend the men's money on military necessities."

The D.D.M.S. was furious and said that he should hear further about it and that the

Cook houses were no better than pigstyes. At that moment a great Rolls Royce drove up flying the Army Commander's flag. Out stepped the great man, and as soon as he saw the Squire, he said:

"Hullo, Johnny, I have just been seeing your Corps Commander and heard you were here so I thought I would come and see you. How are you? Can you give me a dish of tea?"

The D.D.M.S. joined us at tea, and was the most affable man in France and Flanders. I guess we have heard the last about the Cook houses. A C.O. whom the Army Commander addresses as "Johnny" is too heavy metal for a D.D.M.S. to try his new broom against.

Such is human nature. We see human nature at very close quarters here.

You need not be anxious darling about the back area shelling. The Bosch only concentrate on Towns and Railway junctions. We are never in such places, and where we are now we are perfectly safe. We can hardly hear the guns except on a still night.

How I wish I were just coming up the steps at "Ivybanks" and could see you standing

by the loggia with our little Millie holding your hand. But this is a wish that will materialize into fact before very long. In the meantime I send you . . .

Ever your loving husband,

DAVIE.

P.S. Parson Walsingham turned up the other day—he has developed into a militant cleric. He got on the Squire's nerves. But I can quite understand how the change has affected him, this is probably the first real holiday he has ever had since he was a school-boy. Too much food, too much pay, and no work has slightly upset his balance.

7

*From Second Lieutenant Reginald Sparling to  
Miss Frances Dalgery, Dragget Hall, Dragget.*

At the demi-front.

DEAR OLD BEAN,—

I promised to sling you a stylo-full from time to time. Here goes. I'm a full blown

second-loot now and have got a Troop in the best Squadron in the finest Regiment in France. And that's a fact. My Squadron leader is a caution. We call him Hannibal—not to his face. He knows all about War, every kind of war. He overloads the Squadron wagon with great tomes of Stonewall Jackson, and Hamley and Clausovitz and all the other bloods that make the study of war such a monumental failure for the ordinary type of cannon-fodder that I have become.

But he can unbend sometimes and under the influence of a bottle "of the boy" he cheers up wonderfully, and forgets all about the prehistoric battles. He is a great martinet, but those that have been in a show with him say that he is wonderful. The other chaps in the Squadron are good fellows. My troop is composed of proper Berserkers. I have got a Corporal who has charge of our hotchkiss gun. He pays another man to clean his horse and kit so that he can give all his time to his gun. No mother ever bestowed more jealous care upon her firstborn babe than Corporal Carmichael does upon his weapon. It is spotless and before he goes to sleep he wraps the breech up in oiled muslin. We were

out field firing the other day. It is marvellous what the Corporal can do. He can pick up a cigarette tin at 400 yards with his first three shots. God help the Bosch he draws a bead on. My Troop Sergeant is a topper. He's from a Ranch or Estancio or whatever they call it in the Argentine. He has a wonderful authority with the men. He has but to raise his little finger and they jump to do his bidding. I've got two local men from our parts. Young Jim Loder, you know the young farmer that used to ride that Roman-nosed, fiddle-headed, crossgrained horse out hunting that we called Boanerges. He's a Lance Corporal, and Billy Brown your dad's groom. Billy is rather a lad, and wants a rough tongue time and awhile.

I don't see much of your Dad. It's best for Subalterns to keep out of his way. But he always has a kindly word when he comes round the lines. He asked me this morning if I had heard from you lately. But it ain't all kindness I can tell you, if he catches any-one bending. You know what he can say to a field if it over gallops the line. I tell you what with your dad and my Squadron leader, I've got to keep things just right, or I hear

about it pretty quick. I've got a lot of friends round all the same. There are three men of my year, observers in the Flying Corps right against us, and Peter Dixon is with "the Feet" in the new Division that has just come.

But enough about myself, Frank, let me hear something about your sweet self. I hear that you are going to whip in for Fred during the coming season. What horses will you have? I fancy the country has been pretty well combed for anything that's army-like. Horse wastage is awful out here. The last lot of remounts we got weren't horses at all. Yet when I was at the Base I saw all those Vets and Remount fellows riding blood horses, and cutting an awful dash, lending them to the V.A.D.s, as accommodation for philandering. Yet they send up to us any old milk cart hairy, and expect us to do an officer's patrol perhaps fifty or sixty miles in 24 hours on quads like that. It's an awful scandal and everyone is talking about it. I wish our C.O. was Chief of Remounts. He would change all that pretty quick, and would have those condemned Remount loafers, either doing a bit in the Trenches, at least those that were



young enough and the others using bicycles for their picnic parties. They'll all come back after the War covered with medals and, mark my words, calling themselves soldiers, when the only shots they have heard fired will be those at the horses that they have to destroy because they have broken legs at their beastly gymkhanas.

What a long letter I've written you, Frankie darling. That's what the love of a lady will do. Give my old Mother my love and tell her that I am going strong, that is to say if you are exercising anywhere near "Sialkote," and tell father if you see him, that I will collect an Iron Cross for him, in my very first scrap even if I have to butcher twenty Bosche to get it.

Here's chin chin old Bean,

Yours to a cinder,

REGGIE.

## 8

Registered. *Private Alfred Amos (Fly Alf, the Runner and Earth-stopper) to Mrs. Amos, Dragget Village.*

The Base.

DEAR OLD DIP,—

I hopes this finds you as it leaves me full of oats. Hopes you are not too disappointed that I haven't hopped over to Blighty as my postcard said. If you are you must have your bit of fun thinking of your sodger otherwise engaged, but I found this Rest Camp so full of mugs that I couldn't let them slip even for a night or two with you old girl. Here is the stuff 46 shining beauties that I have peeled off the mugs here. Me and Piccadilly Jim of ours does it together. You put it straight into the Post Office Bank with the other of mine and keep two shiners for a jolly yourself. We almost cleaned up the Regiment with Crown and Anchor, Houseie and Jim's roulette. But most of the money toffs has gone off to become blooming officers. So we did more money-lending than C and Anchor. Then me and Jim gets our Blighty

“leaf” together and comes down here to this Rest Camp and strikes it rich among a mob of mugs, new mugs passing through all the time. Why after we gave the Camp Sergt Major fifteen quid to shut the other eye we each took about 40 shiners a week. We shall hang on here until the Regiment begins looking for stray hounds then for another few quid the Sergt. Major will have us employed on his books. Ain’t much amiss with Fly Amos and Piccadilly Jim. So you just weigh in and have a razzle on your own old Dip while I’m piling up the stuff. I struck it soft in the Regiment as I took on batman to Mr. Dodwell. He is one of the rich ones and hunts with the Pytchley, so we can talk hounds together both being hunting men like. He’s easy to do for, and I get off all ruddy fatigues and guards and has plenty of easy to use for business. You take it from me Dip, this here blooming War is the best patch we’ve struck, and if I can work the Sergeant Major here to the right tune, I might get on here for “keeps” and take it off the mugs for months and months. The stuff’s so easy that it’s “top o’ the ’ouse” all the time and if the War lasts a bit we’ll take a little pub, and you’ll be my lady with a barmaid

and slavey to do for you, and I'll walk two couple of pups, and go to the meets in my dog cart perhaps, and no more blankety thirty miles on shank's mare and no boxes of *fussees* sold. You'll have a steak and onions ready for me when I comes back, and no more frowsy kippers. Don't blab as to how the rhino's come by, but if you be passing the Kennels tell old Fred that we have been left a fortune by a rich uncle dead in Australia, and that I'm making a name for myself as a soldier and maybe will be getting V.C.s with Bars for killing "Allemans." You buy the kids some toys and "lollis" with love from Daddy with them two quid you may keep out of this parcel. The Squire's holding up very well. Of course I do not see as much of him here as I do in the hunting season, but he passes the time of day with me when we does meet. Just before I came down here he said to me "How do you think the Hunt is getting on without us Amos? Do you think that Miss Frances and Fred will keep down the foxes?" I answered "I don't know about old Fred, your honour, but there ain't no flies on Miss Frances" so if you see the young lady at the Kennels tell her that "Fly Amos" is

keeping his end up at the Front, and he hopes as how she is keeping hers up with the hounds.

Well here's all the best to you Dip old girl  
Your old man

ALF AMOS.

See that no moth gets into my two pink coats or my hunting caps.

Master Reggie from "Sialkote" has joined the Regiment as an officer. He give me a pair of karki breeches as fits a treat.

9

*To Mr. J. Agular, of "Volvens," Dragget, from  
Major T. Agular (General Staff).*

DEAR FATHER,—

I have been rather pressed during the past few days or I would have answered your long and interesting letter before. But General Baxter has been under the weather, and most of B.G.G.S' work as well as my own fell to my share. Baxter is now back again, so I

have a little breathing space. I will try to answer your questions in seriatim.

You ask if I can see any prospects of the War being brought to a finish within a reasonable period. All depends upon what you may consider to be a reasonable period. If you say six or nine months, I must say "No." If you say three years I would suggest that the answer is "Yes." If any circumstances should induce the Americans to "come in" on the side of the Allies, then the weight of their numbers and their material—**MATERIAL** in capitals—will decide the issue, but not rapidly. As far as my perception goes, that is as a more or less junior Staff Officer, it is now merely a question of man power and material. If the enemy persevere in their unrestricted submarine campaign, and we can produce no adequate antidote the final issue must be obscure. We are as an army increasing in efficiency, but are shaky as to the maintenance of our man power. The French on the other hand have not got over Verdun and the Chemin des Dames and are decreasing in efficiency—deplorably so we hear from the South. The question of their morale and man power is also giving cause for apprehension. Russia

has ceased to be a factor, and Italy may at any moment present us with a disagreeable surprise packet. So much for the general view as it presents itself to me.

What I am going to say now is of course a purely personal view: but I am not satisfied myself that the philosophy that pervades the G.S. at the present moment of these tremendous holocausts of lives in frontal assaults of prepared positions, is the right one. The theory is that all we have to do is to kill Germans, and force a decision by attrition. I have a greater respect for the German to-day than I had in 1914, and you know how I respected his military qualities in pre-War days. There would be something in our philosophy, if we were sure that we were killing two good Germans for each good English soldier that we sacrificed. But I can see nothing to prove that we may be doing so. My impression—formed by the universal success of the enemy in counter attack—is that they fill their forward lines of trenches with inferior cannon-fodder, which they are prepared to sacrifice, and then loose upon our disintegrated advance, good troops that have been kept in comparative safety in the rear. If I am right the possi-



bility remains that in its results our present philosophy reacts upon our own heads. In that we lose three to four to one of our best fighting material against the similar type of the enemy, and that they are content to write off their inefficients lost in their forward trenches. When we have worn ourselves threadbare, then the enemy will have in reserve a sufficient mass of their best troops with which to essay a real smash through us. I hope I am wrong. Anyway wiser people than I am, and with more information than is available to me, are responsible for our present philosophy.

Perhaps we may produce some Alexander who will get us out of this costly and bloody ruck of parallel trenches and will show us the path to Victory by some other means than the sacrifice of Division upon Division in its utmost entirety to snatch for a few hours of miserable insecurity a few acres of shell-pocked France. I only pray that he may come quickly before it is too late.

You ask me how the soldiers of to-day compare with us who first came out to France. That is a question that I find hard to answer. One thing is certain we—that is the Regular soldier—must alter the fixed view that it takes

many months and years to fashion the civilian into an adequate officer or soldier. For the purposes of the present type of fighting our improvised Divisions are just as good as were the original Divisions of the Expeditionary Force. Even perhaps better as they have the advantages of experience to aid them. Whether they would be as efficient as we were in a War of Movement, if we are ever to see such a phase again here on the Western Front, is open to argument. Those of us who are persistently conservative—and we soldiers as a body are peculiarly conservative—believe not, and rather hug that belief. Personally I have an open mind. I have seen such prodigies of valour and clear headed military execution on the part of junior regimental officers and men who a year ago were but grocer's assistants, and civilian artisans that I believe that we have a genius for soldiering that is national and spontaneous.

This reminds me of an amusing incident that happened in our No. 2 Mess, here at Corps Headquarters. We have in the "Q" branch a Major called Spencer—staff college man and pretty efficient, quite above the average. He has a brother a Captain in

Squire Dalgety's yeomanry, which as you know is our Corps Cavalry Regiment. Our Spencer asked his Yeomanry brother to dine. Before dinner had begun the Yeoman, whom I gather is a business man of some perspicacity in Birmingham, began to call his Staff College brother down, for what he called the "mystery-making of soldiering." He said that the attitude of the Regular Soldier to the Irregular was that of a medicine-man to a crowd of savages. That he himself had come into the War in the belief that he had to learn a profound and highly intricate profession. That when he had got down to it he found that it was only a matter of simple commonsense—horse sense, and that anyone, who was not mentally deficient, could master it in a matter of days. He went on to tell his brother that the air of superiority that the Regulars assumed, was but the pose of the aforesaid Medicine-man and was employed to give the so-called art of soldiering an importance that it could not support upon an intelligent scrutiny—and he wound up with the Parthian shot to his brother "You know we would not take you into the business because we thought your mentality was not up to it—but would

do for the Army alright." I am not sure that there is not something in this point of view. Certainly it used to be the Chinese calculation as to those best fitted to be destroyed in conflict. Any way those of us who survive this War will have to rebalance our estimate of the values of our Auxiliary Forces.

Yes it is very nice having the Squire's unit in the Corps. The Corps Commander has a high opinion of Colonel Dalgety. I am supposed to be responsible for training supervision of the Corps' Troops. I just ask the Squire to let me have a résumé of what he proposes and leave it at that. If you have a good Regimental officer, keen to do his best, the less meddling by Majors with Red Tabs the better. Naturally I see more of Melrose. Melrose is now Dalgety's Adjutant. He is a charming and quick witted fellow, and it is a pleasure to be helpful to him when he wants any help. The next time you see Mrs. Melrose you might say that you had heard from me that her husband was doing splendidly. It will cheer the little woman up, and I always found her such a pleasant woman, and quite the most attractive lady in our part of the world. It must be very hard for her left

alone, but I am sure that you and Mother will be looking after her.

How's Frankie Dalgety getting on. She's a go ahead young person. I should not be surprised if she turned up here driving an ambulance or doing something strenuous. Have they caught Bassett yet, or is he still skrimshanking. If he doesn't join up soon his life won't be worth living, when those of us who survive come back home again. It is certainly clever of him to play Box and Cox in his two farms in different counties. It's like the old dog fox in the Withy beds. When they draw the Withy beds he is in Stonehangars and when they put hounds into Stonehangars he's back again in the Withy beds. How I wish it were all over, and I could hear old Fred's horn when a fox is away from Bottom Copse.

Thank Mother for the socks and hankies. They arrived safely, as did the tobacco and the patê.

Much love to you both  
From your affectionate and hard worked son  
Tom.

## IO

*Private George Stutt (Cowman at Holmacre Farm) to Miss Joyce Meakins (Housemaid at Dragget Hall).*

DEAR JUICY,—

Drat it. See them blots. That's what happens to us soldiers. Here I am sitting on the steps of our dug-out writing to the only girl I ever loved—that is properly,—and a blooming Bosche spots me and shoots the blinking pen out of my hand. Bust it he has, so I have borrowed the Corporal's stylo. This ain't no place for uninsured folk, not half. I've now gone two steps lower down into the bowels. He can't get me here unless he drops a Rumjar on the top of the whole bally caboodle. How would you, Juicy, like to jump into your aeroplane and fly over here to join your pal in this here dugout. You would find it all flyblown and muddy and cigarette ends. But we wouldn't mind, would we ducky, we'd yank the other chaps out, and have the place to ourselves for a little bit of orlright. I can see Nobby and Blinker and Topmast and even the Sergeant, all block-

ing up the entrance to see what we was a doing of and how we was a doing it and all the time the Alleman snipers picking of them off one by one. First the Sergeant—Gibbs his name is—I wouldn't mind calling "Hi stretcher" for him. Then Nobby—the worst I would wish poor old Nobby would be a nice "Blighty"—then Topmast—he's so tough it would take a Coalbox to break him up—then Blinker—shall be sorry when old Blinker goes, he's a poet and makes up verses all about the girls he has put through the hoop. Then last of all Corporal Loder—you knows about him Juicy, farmer Loder's son. He ain't half bad, but then if he went this here pen would be mine. Well, old girl, this is how we all drops off in this soldier business. But I should just like to squeeze you once or twice before I hits it rough. But George Stutt—Private George Stutt No. 13561 ain't so easily done in. I was out last night in No Man's Land on a wire mending patrol. I can tell you it was dead man's ground when I left it. I got separated a bit and it was all like Guy Fawkes day in Dragget Park. Them Vary lights going up like Roman Candles all around and the guns crashing and flashing,



and suddenly I sees a patrol of Allemans coming my way all crawling on their bellies like snakes. So I just stood aside and bayon-  
etted them one by one as they crept past me. They just grunted and died, and it fair made my arms ache, forking each into a shell hole to make way for the next. There was fifteen of them in all. When I had done in fourteen, the last one looked up in my face and said pitiful-like "Spare me for my poor mother's sake." Well Juicy you know I am that tender-hearted, that I couldn't put my spike into him. But I had a five franc note in my pocket so I gave it to the poor blighter and told him to go back home and buy something with it for his mother. Oh I am that soft hearted I ought never to have been a soldier. Well in the morning when the Squire was going his rounds, he sees me a cleaning the blood off my rifle and says to me "Well, George, and how many was it last night?" I ups and salutes and says "14, my Lord!" And he answers "Seven brace—not enough George, if they are all like you and can only do in seven brace in a night, we shall take a very long time to kill off all the blighters. Never mind you are young yet and you will

improve. Have a cigar?" With that he gives me a "toofer" with a great red and gold band on it and passed on. But before I could light it that herring-gutted son-of-a-b—— Sergeant Gibbs, snatched it away out of my hand and said—that ain't a smoke for the likes of you. You are too young. You leave it to me, son, and go and fill in those latrines. There that's how they treat a brave man out here, Juicy. But you won't treat me so cruel, will you ducky, when I get a bit of blighty, and am waiting for you down by the haystacks, with my arm in a sling and a string of medals on my manly breast.

Them fags you sent me was A.1. I got your photograph in my breast pocket. It ain't got less than five bullet holes in it. But then we don't mind that it fair rains bullets when the Allemans put up a strafe. Master Reggie's my Troop Officer he ain't half bad, that is if you keep your horse fit and your kit clean. He give the troop 3 bottles of whisky on his birthday which didn't half warm us up. Best drink I've had out here. That there estaminet beer is poor muck it is even worse than old Jenk's swipes at the "Hare and Hounds."

Well old Top—hope this finds you as it leaves me—just longing for it. Tons of kisses and all that sort of thing

Your faithful

GEORGE.

“Murderer of Allemans.”

## II

*Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Mr. James Loder,  
Holmacre Farm.*

MY DEAR LODER,—

You must take it like a man. I have terrible news for you and dear Mrs. Loder. A sniper killed your boy yesterday morning. Jim, you and I were boys together; played our games together; grew up to man's estate together, have ridden jealous to hounds and over many points-to-point together, so you will know how it pains me to have to write this letter. Such a promising lad too. Dick and Harry, I have already sent home to be made into officers, and Jim was to have followed

his brothers with a like object next week. I had marked him down for my own Regiment, I liked him so, and so admired his pluck, ability and bearing. He was employed in the important duty of forward observation on the Corps Front. It is a duty in which I employ my very best men, that proves to you, Jim, what I thought of him. A German sniper must have been watching closely, as the poor boy was shot through the loophole. We have this consolation: death was instantaneous. I know nothing I can say can alleviate your, and your dear wife's grief. But I will say this, Jim, you have both given a very gentle and gallant son to England, when England's want is very great and desperate.

We buried him with military honours last night, and were fortunate enough to get Walsingham, our own curate, to read the Service.

Jim, I feel your loss almost as much as you do. You and Mrs. Loder have my heartfelt sympathy.

Yours always,

JOHN DALGETY.

I trust that this may arrive before the W.O. telegram.

## I 2

*Corporal David Delamain, of "The Grange,"  
Dragget, to Miss Frances Dalgety.*

DEAR FRANCES,—

It was most kind of you to remember me, and I must thank you very much, firstly for the tin of chocolate, and secondly, and more vehemently for the letter inside the box. It has touched me greatly in that my humble capacity in the ranks, I have not been forgotten in the scope of your largess. You ask me why I have selected to remain a private soldier? Well, I haven't stuck to my original intention, and your father has promoted me to be a full corporal. To fill vacancies I presume owing to there being a general exodus, of those amongst us, who are likely to make officers. I have been paraded a second time before your father, and he has been kind enough to suggest that if I will reconsider my decision of not putting myself forward for commissioned rank, that he will take me as an officer in the Regiment. This I must say has somewhat shaken me in my determination to see the war out as a private soldier, or as a non-commissioned

officer, I now should say. So the matter has been left open. My reasons for, what your father was pleased to call a perverse and senseless attitude, are both healthy and rational. In principle I am opposed to War in every form. I am a conscientious objector: but not I hope on cowardly grounds. Do not think me a prig. But to me the human frame is such a wonderful, mysterious and perfect piece of mechanism, that it seems to me wicked for us to harm it. Soldiers of necessity are therefore, to my way of thinking, the most heinous of iconoclasts. Although I hold this view, I am not simple enough to permit unrestricted destruction on the part of others. I, however, thought I could salve my conscience, if I did not shoulder the responsibility of instructing others to destroy human frames. This will doubtless be difficult for you to appreciate, and now that I have accepted subordinate rank, I am afraid that it is dawning upon me that by persevering in it I am splitting hairs. Moreover I have fired a rifle—not in anger—but in cold determination to protect my country from the iconoclasts. The finger on the trigger has a devastating effect upon the good resolutions of the “conscientious objector.”

They brought in the youngest Loder boy last night shot through the head by a sniper. We buried him after sundown. The sight of that poor boy's body, with the to me mysterious and inexplicable mystery of the vital spark destroyed, has created for me an entirely new horizon. I have known him, as I have known you, Frances, he must be about your own age, from his childhood up. Somehow, as we were burying him (and we had Walsingham, our own village curate, over from his Division to read the service), the bastiality of it all was brought home to me. I even thought of you, it was so homelike to hear Walsingham's sing-song recitation of the Burial Service. I thought of the awful possibility of the terrific scenes of merciless destruction that we have all around us here, being brought to our homesteads. I even pictured your beautiful little person unspared by the ruthless iconoclasm of war. It brought into my being a new passion—a passion I have never experienced before, a passion that I did not believe that I possessed. It was the passion for vengeance. I have now communed with myself. I have some position, some wealth even, and education, if Oxford stands for

anything. I know my duties as a private soldier. From every standpoint it seemed to me that I was far better equipped to be an officer than many hundreds who have already accepted those responsibilities. Could I not give a greater effect to my new-found passion for vengeance as an officer, than in my present subordinate rank? My whole being has answered: "It is your bounden duty to become an officer," and I have asked my Squadron Commander if I may go before your father to-morrow. Forgive me for having thus unburdened myself to you, Frances. But I have few persons in the world, and we have been pals ever since you were a toddler trying to balance yourself on your fat pony "Tomtit" and you are at least seeing that my birds are being looked after for me. Please consider this outpouring of mine, as a little confidential talk between us, and forget the purport of it. I do not often let myself go—but somehow to-night I had to. This war is shaking the foundations of us all.

Good night—and God bless you.

Yours affectionately,

DAVID DELAMAIN.

(Conscientious Objector!!)



## 13

*From Regimental Sergeant-Major Henry Haslam  
to his Wife, Mrs. Haslam.*

DEAR MATILDA,—

Thank you for your letter and the kummer-band. It should cure this persistent stomach trouble which has been with me nearly 10 days. Well, dear, if you still insist I will ask the Colonel to send my name up for a Commission. But I don't want to be an officer. You do not understand the position. As Regimental, I am a much more important person than I shall be as a 2nd Lieutenant. A 2nd Lieutenant is of no real importance at all, and at my age and with my figure, I do not fancy myself as a person of no importance whatsoever. Moreover I shall always be exposed to considerable danger. I am not I hope a coward, but I have completed twenty years of soldiering and have four campaigns to my credit, and I don't fancy being shot as a Lieutenant in the trenches, when as Regimental I would be in a safe place behind. Then we have to think of the future. When the war is over what kind of an officer shall

I be, and what kind of officer's wife will you be, with me a lieutenant of 45 years.

I know that most of my old comrades have taken Commissions, and I can see that it is galling to you to see Mrs. Brookes and Mrs. MacWhiffle hobnobbing with the Colonel's wife, and going to tea with her on equal terms, while you are sniffed at as a common soldier's wife.

But what will it be after the war is over, and our temporary commissions are taken back from us? Where will your Mrs. Brookes and Mrs. MacWhiffles be then?

No dear, if it will flatter your vanity to be an officer's wife, I will put in for a commission. But I tell you frankly that I don't like it. I am very comfortable where I am, thank you, with a sterling good commanding officer, who is a big man in his own country, and who is not likely to forget his old Regimental when the War is over. But if you must have this social climb, then I will give in for you. That shows you how much I consider you, dear, because frankly I don't like it.

Ever your loving

HAL.

## 14

*From Lance-Corporal Joe Buck (ex-Postman,  
Dragget Village) to Mrs. Buck.*

DEAR CARRIE,—

I hope these lines will find you as they leaves me in good health. I am fed up. I am too old for this sort of racket, and there is too much noise and not much to drink when they has cut all that is coming to you and the kids. I know it is hard Carrie but buck up, it must end some day. How I do long for a good glass of beer. Something with a body in it. Don't you be forgetting about the garden seeds. Give old Pimpleton a bob to do the digging for you. He ain't too rheumacy to do a bit o' fine evenings. I don't quite follow your trouble about your ring paper; but whatever you do don't go to the Vicar, or them gossips the Miss Baileys. They is all right for flannels and baby linen but no great shakes at business, and they are all talk. You go right to the Hall and see Miss Frankie and say I said so. She's got a head on her shoulders, and she won't see the kids of her old Joe wanting for any-

thing they ought to have. You are too shy-like about these things. There's them that gives like the Vicar and the Baileys out of advertisement of their good deeds, and there's them that don't give at all out of their meanness, and there's them that likes to give out of their good heart like Miss Frankie and don't say nothing about it neither, nor want to make a name out of a poor man's needs. There was no need for me to join up; but the old soldier in me would out. I ought not to complain the old man has given me a kooshey job not that I minds fighting mind you, the proper kind of fighting I was used to, but I ain't no scholard and I can't make nothing of these maps and things and the young officers of to-day are not what they was in my day. They is all impatience, and know more than the sergeants do—or pretend they do. I am glad little Ralph has got over his cold and that Winnie will soon be leaving school. Now you must get her a proper place. It means a lot for a lass to have her first place in service in a good house. You go and see Mrs. Mustard at the Hall and see if she will take her as a scullery maid. Take Winnie with you when you go and see Miss Frankie about

your ring paper and let her have a posy of flowers and curtsey proper to the young lady and you just say what you wants and what your old Joe wants and you won't have made no mistake. Besides Mrs. Mustard likes me. I know that by the breakfasts I get at the Hall on my rounds. No cook never gives a postman ham and eggs if she don't like him. Least that's my experience. So get Winnie in to the Hall, and don't try any of these maid-of-all-work jobs as a start. Them kind of people is all very well in their way but they don't ground young girls proper and works them too hard. Young Mr. Melrose is now Adjutant. Nice young feller I always thought when I took his letters to "Ivybanks." Good class home that. Trust a postman to know the tone of a gentleman's house. What beats me is Mr. Delamain being in the ranks with us here. Now his letters were an officer's letters, all from Banks and Stockbrokers and toffish things like that and here he is just a corporal and not a snappy jack-in-office like so many, with just simple "Hullo Joe, brought me any mail to-day have a bit of chocolate!" Makes me laugh, and Tom Pedlar a bloke in front of him, and he

saluting as ought to be the boot on the other foot. The war's a rum game and has me beat. I'm writing these lines in the Roman Catholic Hut. Don't tell the Vicar but the R.C. hut is much better than the Church Army, they don't ram tracts and Bibles down one's throat here; but just give a tired old soldier man place and time to rest and write a few lines to his wife and kids at home. All the best from

JOE.

You do as I tell you and go and see Miss Frankie.

## 15

*Chaplain Walter Walsingham to Rev. Hubert Birtwistle.*

MY DEAR VICAR,—

I must thank you for your long letter, and your very kind and valuable advice. I had myself set myself to think furiously over the conundrum that I had sent you, and, strangely

enough, had come to a decision that is practically the same as yours. Of course, the War has—at least temporarily—upset all values both moral and secular. Our first Christian duty is to win the War. The Squire, as you say, is a good Churchman in his home surroundings and a liberal supporter of the Church, and yourself—which naturally includes me. He is out to do his utmost to win the War as far as his particular unit is concerned. The question whether he is encouraging his men to commit the mortal sin of immorality must not be asserted, if by so doing the great Christian object of the War is to be impeded. One must hope that good accomplished on the one hand, will atone for the subsidiary sin on the other. As the War has, as I have said, upset all known values, recognizing this fact we must for the time being shape a new adjustment in proportions.

But I must admit the Squire, good Churchman that he undoubtedly is, is somewhat a trial to me. When Chaplain Arnott went on leave, I was put in charge of the Corps. I thought it would be nice to have a full Church Service of the Squire's Regiment, as it has in it so many men from our own and the neigh-

bouring parishes, and I had planned out an address that from my local knowledge, would have brought all their home surroundings and influences near to them.

The Squire would not meet me: not even half way. He said that there would be a voluntary Church Parade as usual, and that it was up to me, and my influence, to attract the whole of the Regiment if I could. He flatly refused my suggestion that there should be a Regimental Parade and said that if he ordered 30 per Squadron, it would only be a compulsory fatigue—fatigue mind you—and that the Sergeant Majors would only detail defaulters and wasters. Of course this is preposterous. As you know some men are diffident about exposing to their comrades their religious leanings. They just need that trifle of compulsion that will not make them conspicuous amongst their fellows. The Squire was obdurate. “No,” he said, “your Church Services must be voluntary, but I will put it in orders that you are taking it.” I had to leave it at that. I went and asked Major Aguilar about it: just put out a feeler to see if a higher authority would do anything in the matter. He laughed at me—how can



these people treat religion so lightly—and said it was a Regimental affair, and not one that had anything to do with the G.S. Consequently there were not more than 45 for the Service, when there ought to have been at least 300. But the Squire and his Adjutant came, and congratulated me on my address, and gave me lunch afterwards. I half believe that he regretted that he had not ordered a Regimental Service. But he is not the kind that will give way.

I buried poor young Jim Loder, who was shot by a sniper in a forward observation post. I got a few of his things from his servant which I sent to his poor Mother. There will be much sadness in that nice family, as I fear that poor Jim was the favourite son. You will have seen them doubtless and exercised your wonderful influence with them in their adversity.

It was a great opportunity for me to act as Chaplain to the Corps. Somehow it seemed to bring one into closer touch with the bigger and more important questions of the day. But of course a Staff Officer's lips are sealed. One may hear things but one may not repeat them. But there are great events afoot.

My affectionate duty to yourself and your dear wife,

Yours very sincerely,

WALTER WALSINGHAM.

16

*Lance-Corporal Charles Collins (H.Q. Cook)  
to Miss Imogen Mettle (Schoolmistress).*

DEAR MISS METTLE,—

It was nice to get your long letter. You do not know what your letters mean to me. I have read the last over so often that I know it by heart. I should love to be walking down the main street and to look in at the School-room window, and see you in front of the blackboard, with all the little piccaninnies round you, and the rosebud, that I had got when Miss Frankie was doing the flowers, nestling at your waistband. It all seems so strange to be at this War. You and the school so far off like a dream. Do write and say that it will come back again. This cannot

be a very long letter, as we are all packing up for some move—destination unknown, so as I have to get all the things into the Mess cart ready to start before daylight to-morrow my time is short. I cooked them a fine dinner to-night. Tomato soup, tinned herrings in batter, boiled ham and spinach—but I had to give them tinned peaches, as I hadn't anything to make a proper sweet with. I am going to set up as a Chef when this dreary war is over. So you think that young Bassett is after Miss Frances. I don't think. I know Miss Frankie better than you do. I've waited on her since she was a schoolgirl, and she won't stand for any man as is afraid to come out here and do his bit. I expect she finds it's just useful to have a man about to fetch and carry for her. Why she would take the curate before she took Bassett, and the curate's no end of a dead-head soldier out here these days. He preached a sloppy sermon here last Sunday all about our village. I didn't go to it, I had my lunch to cook but Jock Jagers went and he said it was that sloppy that it fair made him reach and has put him off Church for a long time to come. By the way old Joe Buck, the postman, he's

our post corporal out here and is very sly. You wouldn't think that he knew anything he reads so badly, yet he knows everybody's handwriting. He seems only to have to weigh a letter in his hand to know what's in it and who it's written to and why. He tells me that your boss Bickford is writing hot and strong to Mary Loder: that he sent her a long letter of condolence when her brother Jim was killed. I thought as how that piece of news might interest you as I was a bit jealous of Bickford. But he's gone off to-day to become an officer, so he'll soon be swanking into your school in a Sam Browne belt. Don't you fall for him Miss Mettle, as his real business will be to do the heavy at Holmacre Farm. I hope to be getting a bit of "leaf" soon, when I shall have something to tell you, which I do not think will be altogether a surprise. I've got a Mills bomb for you, which I will bring home. It's all right as the charge has been extracted, but it will make a nice souvenir to put on your desk as a paper weight. They have got the gramophone going in the Mess. The Squire will have his "Sambre and Meuse." I just shut my eyes and try and think that it's you Miss

Mettle playing the organ in Church. The memory somehow makes me feel tingling all over. Well I must close. Hoping that this will find you as it leaves me.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES COLLINS.

17

*Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Rev. Hubert Birtwistle.*

DEAR VICAR,—

I was much touched to receive so long and encouraging a letter from you. It helps us all very much to feel that we have the thoughts and prayers of you all at home behind us, and it helps me very much to realize that I have a warm hearted and trusted old friend like yourself of so many years' standing, deputizing, as it were, for me in the patriarchal obligations which are really the pleasantest phase of being a landowner. Thank you so much for the news you send me about my

sister Elizabeth, and Frances. It is just what an anxious brother and father would want to know, because although both Elizabeth and Frankie write with commendable regularity, yet they never tell me those intimate things about themselves that one most wants to know. Elizabeth must be careful. Her heart went a little dicky some time ago. I sometimes think that the strain of a War like this is greater upon the women at home than upon us here at the front. We at least have plenty to do, served up with intervals of great excitements. As for Frankie, I don't mind her tiring herself out physically, as long as she does not do so mentally as well. She is young and comes of strong stock. But thank you for warning me about the strenuous life she is leading. What you say about her being the Guardian Angel in the village makes me glow with pride. She is growing up to be the replica both in form and character of her dear Mother, who always brought comfort and happiness to every one. It is very noble of your good wife and the Miss Baileys to organize themselves into a second—or is it third?—committee, with the object of sending parcels to our prisoners of war. Up to the

present we have been fortunate in this matter and none of my men are prisoners of war. But our turn will come. This remarkable immunity cannot last. We are, however, most grateful for the parcels that continue to arrive quite safely to the men of the Village here. It would, however, be advisable not to send underclothes. I know from experience that the first thing the domestic mind of a woman anticipates is wrong with a male, is his underclothes. As a matter of fact, the beautiful vests and pants that have been sent out only last the recipients one shift, as we have to send the men to Divisional Baths periodically when their existing underclothing is taken from them to be fumigated against lice, and they receive a fresh issue of underwear already washed and fumigated. On the other hand the woolly gloves and mittens were much appreciated, as were the "housewives."

I enclose a cheque for £100. £50 for this new Fund and £50 for you to utilize at your discretion to ameliorate the difficulties of any of the wives or families of men from the Parish at the Front. Not confined to the belongings of my own unit. I would have all fare and fare alike. When this is done and you want

more let me know. I have been so taken up with answering the more important part of your long letter that I have not given you anything of our own news. There are indications of "certain liveliness" as the sailor's reports say on the front, and now that winter is past, I expect that we shall soon be in the maelstrom of desperate endeavour again. I have lost a lot of fine fellows regimentally, as they have had to go to be commissioned officers. But they have filled me up from the Base with good material. I see the Blacksmith's son was in the last draft. It is difficult to believe that he has grown up. As I last remember him he was a schoolboy. Delamain of "the Grange" has at last decided to be an officer and has gone to a cadet school, but I expect you will know this, as I fancy he gets some leave first and will have turned up in the village. I propose to take him into the Regiment. He is a curious type and quite an enigma to me. But he will make a very first-class officer. Farmer Loder's two remaining sons have also gone to cadet schools. What a splendid fellow Loder is. He wrote me such a manly letter when poor Jim was killed. I see a good deal of Major Agular,



he has been soldiering abroad so long that we have not seen much of him on his occasional visits to "Volvens." He is a tiptop fellow to have to deal with as a Staff Officer. Not in the least assertive and so understanding. He will I think go far. Melrose I have, of course, always with me. He has now become so essential to me that I do not know how I ever managed to get along without him. By the way I have written to Banister to tell him that the Vicarage is about due for a case of port and a box of cigars. Which will be just a little token of my affection to a cheery old Vicar "somewhere in England." Please make Mrs. Birtwistle drink her share of the port. It will do her good. Please give her the kindest message from me and Believe me, Vicar, to be always

Your devoted friend,

J. J. DALGETY.

## 18

*Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Sir Alexander Sparling.*

DEAR SPARLING,—

Thank you for your long and informative letter. But I will first touch on the subject which I know will be nearest your's and Lady Sparling's heart. Reggie is an excellent lad, and as keen as mustard. I need not tell you that he is a clever lad. I purposely put him in Akerman's Squadron. Akerman is not only my best Squadron leader, but is I believe one of the best soldiers alive. He was as you know a sporting barrister before the War. He has, however, a natural genius for soldiering that is given to few. A genius, that, given the opportunities, produces an Alexander, Cæsar or Napoleon. Any youngster, with his heart in the job, under Akerman, will be developed into a very efficient officer. Akerman has one fault as an instructor, he himself thinks so rapidly, and is so quick in the uptake, that he cannot suffer fools gladly and is very impatient with those that are dull. But this does not apply to your Reggie, and Akerman

is very pleased with him. So I think is my Frances, as she tells me he writes her the cheeriest epistles that she gets from France, and is overflowing with loyalty to his C.O. and unit. So we are a sort of mutual admiration society.

Now to the long view. You of course have a far better perspective than I possibly can have. But if America really comes in, as it looks as if she is about to do, then her action must decide the issue, unless the Germans have sufficient energy up their sleeves to settle affairs here in France before America's aid becomes operative. In this reasoning I anticipate very heavy fighting here in the coming months. I think that the British Army out here is wholesome, but of course there are many rifts in the lute. That has to be since we have produced no great soldier of outstanding merit, who by instinct can rise superior to the associations of his earlier career in soldiering. The result is that although there is enough and to spare of exceptional talent suitable to fill all the higher commands, many of these are still held not only by soldiers of second-class ability, but by men who have demonstrated the limitations of their ability

in the fiery test. Of course the thing has become so immense, and the diplomatic and political conditions are so involved for the High Command that it is almost impossible for it to concentrate on this which to me seems to be the most important duty. Some one said once that the British Army was an army of lions commanded by fools. This is not true to-day. But it is an Army of Lions, commanded by a moiety that does not rise above mediocrity, and the very brilliant other half is not sufficient to leaven the whole. The forces of old associations are too strong against it. I am an old Regular soldier myself and know what old associations mean. But believe me, Sparling, while Staff officers can be "made," efficient generals in the field are a gift from Heaven. Take my own line of life as an example. A Huntsman is born, you may have a dozen most excellent 1st Whips, but not one of them will develop that Divine Spark that produces a huntsman. So with Staff Officers and Generals. This is the weakness that occurs to me in the rapid expansion of a tiny Regular Army into unprecedented proportions when an emergency arrives. The military genius that must be dormant in the

expanded mass, lies dormant, because professional mediocrity must be served first. The percentage of transcendent genius in the professional ranks is in no higher ratio than it is in the mass. It is naturally more easily found, but there is not enough of it to go round. This, my dear Sparling, is not a criticism of any individual amongst my superiors. That is not within me, but is a clumsy interpretation of the unfortunate position into which our voluntary system brings us upon a national emergency. Possibly I have only outlined to you what is the obvious, but if you will just make a summary of the setbacks we have already suffered in this War, you will see that there is overwhelming support to the argument.

Discipline will not permit me to do more than generalize as to a system, but in the good days that are coming and I am a civilian again, I will give you as many concrete cases in support of my contention, that will amaze and I fear horrify you.

What the men out here feel most is the outrageous unfairness of munition workers earning pounds a week with no risks attached, while they have to suffer the rigours of the

Campaign upon a shilling a day and run the risk of death, total or partial injury for life. If there had been even a moderate Statesman in England, he would have mobilized the whole manhood of the nation upon an equal basis.

We are moving to-morrow and there are the usual indications that our period of rest and training will be at an end.

It has, however, been a relief to me to unburden myself to an old friend. All said and done the C.O. of a unit is a very solitary bird, especially if, as I have, a singularly reticent and unresponsive second-in-command. Good soldier but taciturn. If I go under I know that he will fill my place possibly more efficiently than I do myself. But he is not argumentative and sometimes a little argument is a good tonic.

My devoirs to Lady Sparling and my best wishes to you yourself.

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN DALGETY.

## 19

*Captain and Adjutant David Melrose to Mrs.  
Melrose.*

MY OWN DARLING LITTLE MILLIE,—

This is just a hurried note to tell you that we are moving. There is nothing to be anxious about. It is only a routine move. We have had to-day rather a shock. We have just heard that our late Regimental Sergeant Major Haslam has been killed. He left us hardly three weeks ago to take a commission, and as there was no need for him to go to a cadet unit he was posted direct to an Infantry battalion then in the line. He joined his company in the trenches and was killed by a shell the following morning.

It is very sad as he was an exemplary Regimental Sergeant Major, and was perfectly happy as such with us here, and was not in the least ambitious to be an officer. But his wife coveted the enhanced position that she thought his promotion would bring to her personally, and badgered him to apply. Pathetic result, the poor woman is now a widow. When Haslam said good-bye to me,

he was not in the least elated and told me the reason of his going, just as I have repeated it to you.

I was sorry to hear of little Millie's tumble. But I suppose that they must tumble about at her age. I hope that the cut lip has healed properly by this time. But if you think there is likely to be any disfigurement take her to see a specialist: they can do wonderful things nowadays. It is very pleasing to me to hear that everyone is being so friendly to you. I suppose they look upon us now as belonging to the Squire. What a wonderfully nice-minded man he is. They say that no man can be a hero to his valet. Much more so might it be said that no C.O. can be a hero to his Adjutant. My experience is the exception that proves the rule. He is the justest man I have ever met, and considering he has been a M.F.H. for twenty years has a wonderful control of his temper. He turns his anger on with so much discretion, that when you begin to know him you realize that it is not real anger: but anger assumed to meet immediate requirements. All ranks respect and love him. He has created a wonderful *esprit-de-corps*. He certainly is



equipped with a Heaven sent genius for command. With a C.O. like this my job is a very easy one. Although he has infinite patience, he is not weak with malingerers, and I constantly see him deal with defaulters in a manner that leaves the man not unrepentant but thoroughly ashamed. It is a pleasure to handle him and when, in official correspondence, he lets his pen run away with him, which he frequently does, I just edit the effusion for him and let a reasonable time elapse, before I produce it for signature. His answer is always the same:

"Right, my lad, it's your job to keep me straight at my fences!"

We had an amusing case the other day. You will remember Alf Amos, the dirty wheedling runner that attends all Meets dressed in a dilapidated pink coat and velvet cap. Well he joined up with us and finding soldiering in the ranks distasteful took on as somebody's batman. He went on leave home as we thought, and never turned up again. So we wrote him off as a deserter. Then one of the junior officers heard that he had been seen at a Camp at the Base, running a Crown and Anchor stunt. In due course we sent

down to have him apprehended. The cunning old fox had got himself employed at the Rest Camp, so there could be no charge of desertion. He of course played the idiot boy. But his interview with the Squire was a scream. His defence was that some Sergeant Major in charge of the Rest Camp at the Base, was so harassed by the discontent of the accumulated men on leave that the boats had not the capacity to carry, that he was employed to entertain them and keep them quiet and that he considered he was doing much better service to his country as a buffoon entertainer, than cleaning an officer's dirty boots. He affected to be shocked, and pained at the very thought that he was a deserter.

"And what was it worth to you, Amos?" the C.O. asked.

"Begging your parding, Sir," the little man replied. "If it hadn't been for them harpies the Sergeant Majors it would have turned two hundred quid. But there was no satisfying of them, and I only got away with a hundred and twenty odd nett, and that's gospel."

The C.O. sent him back to duty in the ranks,

and said he was never again to be employed as an officer's servant, and warned him that if he was caught with his gambling implements he would be sent to the Breakwater at Havre to do a little real work. When he got outside and was dismissed we heard him give a "View Holloa." Incurable ruffian. And the effrontery of the man. The C.O.'s comment when he heard the Holloa was simply,

"That blackguard Amos knows more about foxes and their habits than any other man that I have ever met. He has run with my hounds for twenty years and he has never put me wrong once."

You know where he lives, Milly, it is in that little cottage half way to Silver's Pastures, the thatched cottage with the attractive garden. Either the old ruffian himself or his wife, is a wonderful gardener. You might pop in and see her one day. I expect she could tell you some amusing things about her Alf.

Well, darling, that is all the news. When you are putting little Mill to bed to-night give her a hug from her Daddy, and then when she is settled, go down to the study and imagine that I am sitting in the armchair and that you are sitting on its arm. And then

imagine all that I am wishing that I were doing, when I have any time to think about anything that has not a Regimental flavour. An Adjutant has not much time for self-communion.

Such a loving embrace from  
Your truly loving husband

DAVIE.

20

*From Second Lieutenant Reginald Sparling to  
Miss Frances Dalgety.*

FRANKIE OLD BEAN,—

We have been right in it up to the neck. I've had the time of my life. It even beats fox-hunting. But I must try and be coherent. The Bosch for some reason went back along our front, and so we hopped over no-man's land and their trenches after them. I was sent off with an officer's patrol. Corporal Simms and four of my very best Berserkers. We got into touch with some of their Jagers

almost at once, and, as it wasn't my job to fight but to get round them, we had the most fascinating game of hide and seek. These Jagers were Cyclists and they were "Johnnie Walkers" each time, but we did in their rear section, by hiking full tilt down a narrow valley and lying up for them behind a mined farm's walls. You would have split your sides, to have seen the *finale*. Four perspiring cyclists peddling like hell, five British rifles popping in their faces. All four Bosche came tumbling off. Three from fright and one with a full charge poor chap. I sent the three back on foot with one of my Berserkers, smashed their rifles at the small of their stocks and pushed on. My job was to see if a French Town—we mayn't mention names—was occupied. Had to be a bit cautious as I went in. But the townspeople came out and welcomed me. You never saw such a welcome, and said that the last Boche had just left, and as if by magic the whole place became decorated with French flags. Just as I got to the Market Square, a lot of Cavalry came in at the far end. I was just about to order a quick flit, when I recognized the helmets as French, so we had a great *Entente Cordiale* in the middle

of the Square. The bells pealed and the City fathers brought out bottles of brandy. In fact, I thought it wise to withdraw, as my jolly Berserkers are bad enough without brandy; but with brandy in the quantities it was offered there could be no saying what they might not do. Anyway I had to get down to the Somme, so I sent one Berserker back with the news that the town was occupied by the French, and pushed on. Just as I got in sight of the River there were three or four big explosions. I had, however, completed my job, so after a halt and feed, I set out to try and find my Squadron. We had a somewhat hairey time getting back, as our Infantry had moved in across the Bosch Trenches and hypnotized by months of Trench warfare, had never seen mounted men on their Front before. They took us for Bosch and let us have it good and proper. I now understand why the War has lasted so long. If they don't learn to shoot better than they shot at us, machine guns and all, the war will go on forever, as nobody will get hurt very much. Corporal Simms copped one in his wallets, but it did not do any harm and that's all the casualties we had. Somehow I got back to

Headquarters. No wonder I couldn't find the Squadron, it had gone off into the blue after its own herd of Jagers. The Squire was very bucked, and said that my information had come in in good time and that my three Bosch scalps were just what he wanted and he gave me a drink of port out of his flask and told me to follow up my Squadron at my own pace. But this, Frankie, was only the curtain raiser, we've been hard at it for four days, and to-day is our first breather. I found the Squadron down by the Somme, and old Hannibal—that's what we call Major Akerman—was building a bridge all night. The Bosch had blown up the bridges: but they had left a stack of cut timber within a dozen yards of the spot. This came in handy. But there was no peace for the wicked. Old Hannibal sent me on a raft across the river to make a night patrol on the far bank. It was a creepy affair but we did a radius of about a mile and found no Bosch. I got back at daybreak to find the bridge finished and the Regiment leading over. As our Squadron was advanced guard there was nothing for it but to find our led horses, and carry on. It was a glorious morning and after the mud and congestion of

our late surroundings a perfect joy to be out on open and rolling downs again. We picked up the Bosch Rearguard about 10 o'clock. But they weren't putting up any fight. We were before our time from their reckoning, since, as our Point came into this Burg, where I am now writing, a Regiment of Uhlans clattered out at the far end, and the Bosch Colonel's breakfast table was found already laid with his *würst* and *pumpernickel* all waiting for him and eight eggs boiling in a pot on the kitchen stove. My Berserkers cleaned this lot up. I can't go on with this, old Bean. Hannibal has just sent to tell me that I'm for an immediate patrol—no rest for the wicked. So long, dear heart.

Lots of the best,

Yours to a cinder,

REGGIE.

P.S. I wasn't a bit "windy," one has no time to be, and with my jolly Bs one couldn't be.



## 21

*Second Lieutenant T. Pedlar (ex-Village Grocer,  
Dragget) to Miss Amy Bailey.*

DEAR MADAM,—

Your valued lines reached me only this morning. We have been having a brisk time for about 10 days. Moving and fighting all the time. By a lucky chance old Joe Buck came through to us with a mail. He is a wonderful hardy old man and how he managed to get here on his bicycle, up hill all the way I cannot think with two large mail bags. I expect he pinched a lift on the transport somewhere. We have had some smart fighting, and lost some men and horses, but no one from our ways, so I need not mention no names. I heard the Squire say that Mr. Reggie Sparling had done very well on the first day. This part of the country has been destroyed by the Germans something terrific. All the houses blown up, trees cut down, and great holes blasted in the roads. It is very nice me now being an officer, but sometimes I wish as how I wasn't. It was a little awkward at first, as I had not much polish, Madam,

as would not have been expected in a simple village boy: but they was all very kind to me and by keeping my eyes skinned, I soon tumbled to what's what.

I of course knew that Charlie Collins was gone home. He will be wild to have missed all these excitements, but I expect there will be lots more coming along. So he's keeping company with the schoolmarm. What will the schoolmaster have to say to that, and him an officer now too: but Charlie always had a way with him with the girls. I mind when he was walking out with two of them at the same time, and even as an officer I cannot help noticing that he gets on very fast like if there are any French girls in the houses in which Headquarters billets. He gets them to show him how the stove works or any old trick to strike up a friendship. But I don't think he will come back to cook at our H.Q. as Mr. Melrose found a man in "B" Squadron, who has been a ship's cook in a big boat and he cooks a treat and leaves Charlie stone cold. I hear that both the Loder boys have gone to the R.F.C. I am sorry for that, as with poor Jim done in, and the life of the Flying Corps being so short it looks as if Farmer

Loder will only have only his girls left to him. So old Mr. Grindle manages in the shop alright alone without me. It must be hard work for him and him so forgetful about things and always giving wrong weights. There is not much for me to do as Signalling Officer. Visual signalling really does not cut much ice out here. It's all telephones and wireless. We have got a portable set with some sappers attached to us for this operation and they communicate with the Corps direct. The Squadron Commanders are very tricky about sparing men for me to make into Signallers. They foist all their duds on to me. One of them actually sent me a man, who could not read or write. Would you believe it, and signallers want to be the sharpest men you can find.

I hopes Miss Constance is as well as can be expected, and that you are the same Madam as this leaves me.

Yours respectfully,

THOMAS PEDLAR

2nd Lieut.

22

*From Private S. Plimsol, A.S.C. (Chauffeur at Dragget Hall), to Mrs. Plimsol, South Lodge, Dragget Park.*

DEAR JANET,—

This leaves me very satisfied with things. I have got one of the new lorries, and she comes up very well. I like the new Company. It is all right. The Sergeant Major is the usual. No worse and no better. If another War comes along and I have to go to it I shall put in to be a Sergeant Major. It's the softest job in the Army. Nothing to do but eat and grow fat and tell everybody else what they should be doing and not knowing in the least how to do it, and kidding the officers by talking loud that you are the important man of the show. I don't see quite anything to beat it out here. I did think that old Mr. Banister's job up at the Hall was a soft job. But he do have to lend a hand to Charles in cleaning the silver, and has to carve the goose or whatever the day's grub is. But Sergeant Majors have to do nothing of this and they can pinch as much of the rum ration as they

dam well please. I've made my new hooker very comfortable as a doss-house. But I'm getting a bit fed up with these night jaunts up the Menin Road. It's the night work that knocks the stuffing out of you in an Ammunition Column. The goings-on make me fair sick. I often wish I had stayed with the Regiment. Our officers there were at least proper officers. You never know what you get thrown at you in the Muck Train as some calls us. Mostly taxidivers and garage hands that struck it rich, when people weren't troubling much about the kind of man an officer was so long as they got them. The A.S.C. got most of those with a yellow streak. Take what happens to us as a line. We have to go and fill up with heavy stuff in the afternoon, and we have to get this to the Battery Reserve Park in the dark, as the Germans would make a pretty Crystal Palace Show of us if we went down the Menin Road by day. It's bad enough at night with the only light to guide you the blasted shell bursts and you never knowing when some new hole as big as a fish pond won't be opening out in front of you before you can jamb your brakes on. Since we have been on this joy-ride we

have lost 11 lorries—shell—or shell hole casualties. Well the officer and the sergeant major is supposed to go up with the lorries and hand over the shells at the end of the journey and take a receipt for it. Do they? Not on your life! They just hops off before the nifty part begins and says to a corporal, "Here you take 'em along and mind you take a receipt at the other end." They just waits in a cosy smoking cigarettes and drinking hot stuff out of thermos flasks, while we goes merrily along to total up the casualty lists. That's the kind of officer we has to put up with in the good old "Muck Train." I should like to see the officer in the old Regiment would let a Corporal do his job for him because he was afraid of his blinking skin. But they ain't got me yet old girl, though they have made my old bus rock like a rocking horse once or twice. But never mind the guns have to have the stuff to hand over to Jerry, and it's the good old lorry-driver that gets it there on time.

I ran into a Squadron of the old Regiment as it was moving north. But I did not see any of the chaps 'you would know except Jock Jaggers who was riding one of the

Master's horses. He told me that as he had saved a bit he was going to marry May up at the House next time he got some leave. That it was all fixed up. I thought you said that May had fixed things up with Jack Burge the underkeeper. Perhaps she's been keeping both on the string in case one stops something out here. Jock told me that they have at last found old Amos out at his tricks, and that Artful Alf is now a reformed character. Yes, I don't think, I'll bet he's got a set of dice in his haversack, and them loaded too.

Is Miss Frances using the big car much? I hope she isn't as she's terrible rough on the gears, and it's too much power for her, and it will never get looked after proper. But I suppose she finds some difficulty about getting petrol. My aunt you should see how petrol's wasted out here. Why in our Column you could have three baths a day in it if you wanted to and nobody would take no notice. I guess that there is some in these Columns that is making a good thing out of petrol passing it in to the Frenchmen; and that they are not all private soldiers also, not by any means.

Well good night Janet. This is not one

of my nights for the Lovers' Walk the other side of Wipers. I have fixed up a nice little table here inside my lorry, and that is why I can write you such long letters good and comfortable like as long as the candle lasts. It's much nicer than going down to a rotten estaminet to hear a lot of grouching. But I do feel that you must be lonely like, that is why I wish we had a kid or two. But I expect you will be going in to have a crack with Mrs. Birkett, or Mrs. Banister, or even be asked up to supper with Mrs. Mustard at the Hall. Give my best respects to Miss Frances when you see her, and thank her for the woolly in case she never got my letter, and give my chin-chin to all the rest of the gang, and tell old Mr. Banister that I hear they are going to comb out all useless men such as Butlers and send 'em out here in the Labour Battalion up to 65, just to give him a chance of doing a real job of work.

Lots of love, my Jewel,

Ever your loving Husband,

SID. OF THE MUCK TRAIN.

(It may not also be out of place here to put on record the fact that Squire Dalgety's



observant and outspoken chauffeur, volunteered, when volunteers were called for to man the heavy artillery guns, owing to the casualties in the Passchendaele Battles, to work in the gun groups, and earned a D.C.M. for the intrepid courage he exhibited during this period.)

## 23

*From Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgery to Miss Frances Dalgery.*

DEAR LITTLE FRANKIE,—

You were perfectly right to finish the Season when you did. I really think that you and Fred Finch have done very well to kill  $22\frac{1}{2}$  brace. Of course young Bassett has been a great help to you, but my gorge turns when you mention that young man. It surprises me that you yourself have not forced him to join up, but I have a sneaking belief, Frankie, that you, at the bottom of your heart, believe that the preservation of fox-hunting is just as

important as the winning of this war, and that for this reason, you countenance this wretched young man, because he is essential to you in running Fred and the Hunt. I do not, however, envy young Bassett's position when we all come back, there will not be a soul in our part of the County who will speak to him. Tell Carter that I will answer all his conundrums as soon as I have time to sit down and think: but I don't think that any of the questions that seem to be troubling him are in the least bit urgent, and the experts who talk about ploughing up established pasture lands to put them under corn, are just handling a subject they don't understand.

As no doubt one of your many correspondents in the Regiment will have already told you, we have been having exciting times lately. They were busy times for me I can tell you, at one period I was holding four miles of line about six miles in front of the Infantry, with my own unit, a battalion of cyclists, and two companies of Infantry, that were supposed to be placed under my command, but which never materialized. Some problem I can tell you: but fortunately the Bosch never tried to solve it for me. We

have been having rather a hair-raising time, as the Bosch when they gave up this stretch of country utterly destroyed all the villages and made a fearful mess of the place. Wanton and useless destruction it seems to me, as any General Staff should have known that any Army that has been as long in the field as we now have been, would be quite able to administer ourselves even in a desert. But I suppose in some German Textbook it is laid down that this demolition must be carried out to impede the progress of pursuit. But their nastiest trick of all was leaving behind in such places as were habitable, infernal machines with delayed action of from 12 to 48 hours. We had a remarkable escape from one of these. Late one evening one of my Squadrons rounded up a Bosche machine gun section and took an officer and seven prisoners. They were sent back to me, too late to be passed on to the Corps. So I left the prisoners under guard, but, not knowing what else to do, brought the officer into my Mess for some food. He was a sullen sort of cove, and could speak no known tongue. Melrose tried his German on him, but it was so rudimentary that it did not seem to kindle any responsive

spark. We had our Mess in a sort of cellar that was less damaged than the rest of the farm buildings. We've got rather a good cook now, we have transplanted Charles and sent him back to duty, and he turned us out a real good dinner. The Boche officer, bowing gravely, set about his meal with unfeigned zest. He wolfed two huge helpings of roast sirloin, and practically ate a whole tin of peaches to his own cheek. This together with three strong whiskies and water, kind of stirred him, as when the tin of peaches was empty, he pushed back his plate and with a sigh of satisfied repletion said in perfect English: "Gentlemen. I thank you, this is the best meal I have had for six months or more. You have been so hospitable to me, that, as one good turn deserves another, I will now do you one. In the corner of this room is a time-mine, it is timed to go off about 2 o'clock to-morrow morning. I know it is there, as I superintended the placing of it myself. I had anticipated that this cellar would have been used. In fact it was the delay in the placing of this mine that was the cause of my being caught. I am not a machine gun officer but a sapper."

With which he went to a corner of the room, and removed a bit of loose plaster and took out the damned thing. It was a near thing and I don't know whether it was gratitude on the part of our guest, or fear that he might be detained all that night in that cellar, that prompted him to his kindly action. He told us that he had been three years in Manchester in the office of some piece-goods firm.

As you will see, Frankie dear, this War is replete with unexpected excitements. But the sowing of the country with these booby-traps is a beastly habit, and I hear that a lot of French Deputies and City-fathers were blown up by one in the Mairie at Peronne. Also, the entire Headquarters of an Infantry Battalion were fatally buried in a villa, in which one went off, not a mile from here, a mine doubtless laid to the order of the same brute who spared us.

Matters are squaring up with us here now. The Infantry are moving up to take over the positions we have held for them for 11 days. They are naïve people these infantry soldiers. Here we have been using every device and deceit to conceal our positions, even to the moving, in the night, of artesian well head

gears, and roadside religious emblems, so as to upset the enemy's range finding, and the Infantry advance parties go out into the open, and lay out the trace of trenches they propose to dig and hold, on the exposed slopes of the position in full view. No wonder our daily casualties in Trench warfare are so desperately high.

Give your aunt a kiss from me, and take care of yourself little sportswoman. May God preserve us both is the prayer of your affectionate Father

JOHN DALGETY.

24

*From Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Miss Frances Dalgety.*

DEAR FRANKIE,—

The post corporal has only just posted a letter to you when he returned with yours of the 4th. I think I must answer it at once. Even though Major Akerman is grateful to

you and your Aunt Bessie for having given him a week's hunting and hospitality when on leave, he has been injudicious—and that is the lightest word I can use—even if he has been loyal to me, in sending you an account of our operations with reflections upon the Senior Officer under whose command we came for the day. Of course your letter is privileged, and I will make no use of its contents. All the same Akerman has been injudicious, and he might have got himself into serious trouble if his reflections upon this particular General had caught a Censor's eye at the Base. Anyway that is Akerman's affair, and it would not become mine until it were referred to me officially. No one can call my little maid an official, and I appreciate the indignant tone of your remonstrance to me. You must consider that this particular General has ridden into hounds in an excess of zeal. That no harm has resulted, and your rating as passed on to me, is just what the Master said—and then immediately forgot. These things will happen, Frankie, and even if Akerman's diagnosis is correct—mind I don't say that it is—but Akerman is as an efficient cavalry soldier as there is in France to-day—no harm

has been done to me personally, though half a dozen good soldiers have been uselessly killed, about twenty wounded, and fifty or sixty horses lost to the public, just to serve the vanity and petulance of a very second-rate Jack-in-Office. It is all, however, very distressing and certain temperamental characters in command can do an immense amount of harm to the national cause, and what is more strange, survive to carry on sabotage of the National Interests. In this particular case I don't think that the gentleman who reported me to superior authority as unfit to command because I was wanting in courage, quite realized that the Army Commander and I had been brother subalterns in the same Regiment in years gone by. I can imagine X's comment when he heard the suggestion. So don't worry your head, Frankie. Generals good and Generals bad come and go. We subordinates have to take the rough with the smooth. The only thing that counts is whether my officers and men have confidence in me. As long as I have got their confidence and respect—and they know mind you, their perception is much more accurate than superficial observations by any transient General—



I am indifferent to every sort of criticism—criticism that can only be calumny. This much I can say, with my hand on my heart, that I have never sacrificed a single man's life when that sacrifice was not urgent and necessary. Would that there were many greater than me who could truthfully say the same. However, great or small, we are all, Frankie, out to effect one great end. There should be only one common object, and that is to use our best endeavours within our own respective spheres, to win the war, and in the application of these endeavours to waste needlessly none of the lives entrusted to us. It is the last essential, that sometimes becomes obscured, when a struggle reaches the magnitude that this one has reached.

What you say about the hunt horses is what I expected. I doubt if Chester and Blitz will stand another season. But they have been good old servants, and stood in the breech, when things were almost impossible. Let them have their reward. If Fred thinks they cannot do one day a week next season, don't have them put down. Turn 'em out, they have earned a peaceful old age. Chester never put a foot wrong.

Lots of love and forget all about Akerman's letter.

Ever your affectionate Father,  
JOHN DALGETY.

## 25

*Second Lieutenant Reginald Sparling to Sir Alexander Sparling.*

DEAR DAD AND MUMMY,—

I have been rather remiss in the matter of letter writing, but when things are happening the unfortunate Troop officer hasn't much time to be dutiful, and he is usually only too thankful to utilize that time in making up some arrears of sleep. But I have written a note or two to Frankie Dalgety, and I am banking on her having seen either you or Mums from time to time. We have had quite a lot of scuffles with Mr. Jerry in retreat and have brought him up—or rather he has brought us up—dead stop against the tremendous positions he has constructed for his

new scheme of defence. It's been a tremendous experience to me, and I now feel that I am quite an old soldier. I had, as I told you in my last letter, had an officer's patrol, when we first jumped No-Man's land: but when we crossed the Somme I had my own Troop, and the Major told me to do advance guard for him. It was a great sensation moving out into a great expanse of down land like our Downs at home. But for all the world it did not seem much different to the countless field days we had done while training. Which shows that our training any way was on the right lines. But the first popping of rifles, and the first message of a real enemy coming back to one, was a thrilling moment. My men were splendid, proper Berserkers I call them—and I have a Corporal Simms, who is absolutely the best horse soldier that ever pushed a cartridge into the breech with a dirty thumb. You would be surprised to find how easy I found it to handle the advance guard, it all worked out as we thought it would; that's due to the Major who's as sound as a whole carillon. I only had one man hit and one horse, and we had a lot of miscellaneous scrapping and we made our bounds as easily

and quickly as you please. We were almost too quick for the Bosch, and if our final objective on the first day had not been a very big village, too big for one troop to tackle quickly, with due precautions, we would have brought a whole squadron of Uhlan to book. But they got away at full gallop when my flankers got abreast of the village, and with my glasses I could see Corporal Simms dismount his section, and pour magazine fire into them as they disappeared down a sunk road into the Valley.

It has been something doing of this sort every day and all the water in the ponds and wells polluted by the Boche with dead horses, and stable litter. The first two days we had to go back in relays five miles to water. Then we opened out some deep wells that the enemy had overlooked and the water question became alright. They say the Squire was rather resentful about the water, and when some prisoners came in, although he let them have biscuit and *bouilli* Beef, he would not let them have any water except that of the pond with their putrid horses and muck all discolouring it.

But as you can gather it was pretty tough work for us juniors, with an inlying picket every

third night, a squadron standing to all day, and constant officer patrols all the time. Then when we had reconnoitred the whole front, and pretty well located the entire Bosch line, some General turned up, and got the wind up because he saw a Bosch Uhlan patrol three miles below us in the open down land. Presumably these were the first Bosch he had ever seen in three years of war. He told the Squire off good and proper, and said that it was disgraceful that an enemy patrol should be out in the open. Nothing would pacify him in his excitement of the sight of his life—the Squire tried to explain that he was waiting for these said patrols to get a little more confidence, and to come out from under the cover of their machine gun nests. But the General wouldn't or couldn't understand this and went off the deep end, and said that all Cavalry were useless and after what he had seen he didn't believe that we had made any reconnaissance at all. He went back to the Brass Hats, and reported that from his personal observation there were nothing but a few stray Uhlan patrols in front of us and got permission to have a reconnaissance made with one of our Squadrons directed by a selected Staff officer. You

never saw such a fist as this Staff officer made of it. He marched the whole lot down into the open, used the Squadron as if it were an infantry battalion. Of course Jerry was waiting for them, and when they had got them nicely in range opened with at least six batteries, rapid fire. The marvel was that Major Greenshields, that was our Squadron leader's name, got any of his men out at all. But he behaved splendidly and got the Squadron back, with six killed, fifteen wounded and about fifty horses done in. We are all—that is the whole Regiment as sick as mud about it, as if any one of us had done such a stupid thing in a promotion exam, we should have been sent back to read our books for six months. We all feel so sorry for the Squire, as he had protested vigorously and the General turned him down in the beastliest way. Major Akerman was white with rage, because his own reconnaissance of the position the previous day had definitely located the exact position of the enemy's line, and in effecting this he had only one horse hit. But he is very circumspect in what he says, and his only comment to us, was "That is a painful demonstration of the improper employment of, not

only cavalry, but any troops in action. It would pay the country to give the officer who conducted it a pension and a villa at Cheltenham as an insurance against the accumulative national losses that his continued employment must entail!" So now you know why the War drags on so long.

Doubtless, Dad, you in that judicial serenity of yours will say "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings." But if you knew how taciturn our Squadron leader is, and what a profound student of War, you may rest assured that he didn't open out to us, like that, unless he were moved by very profound convictions. I may not be a very experienced soldier, but I know enough not to march bald headed against a position that has been reported to me as entrenched and held in force by the enemy.

We would do anything the Squire asked us to do, willingly, and with the best of heart, because we know that he would never commit us to anything without a reasonable chance of success. But it breaks our hearts to see our wonderful men sacrificed, either callously or stupidly by a stranger, no matter what his rank may be.

That is what we junior officers in the Regiment think about it, and I know we reflect the feelings of the rank and file.

How I have let myself go. I don't think that there is much chance of my getting any leave for the next three months. But I am going to have a shot for some about the end of May. I think a little quiet on the river bank will be a good sedative for me after this strenuous life. It will be a bit of luck if I hit my leave off with the Mayfly.

Lots and lots of love to you both old dears, and give Maria my love, tell her that her cakes are the best that come out to France, and that I shall kiss her on both her rosy cheeks, the first time I blow into the kitchen.

Ever your affectionate son

REGGIE.

P.S. Melrose just sent me a note to say I've got a M.C. for my first officer's patrol—Corpl. Simms the M.M.



## 26

*From Private Jock Jagers to Miss May (Dovey)  
Tickner.*

DEAR OLD DOVEY,—

This leaves me not half so snorty as yours left you. There is no call for you to take on like that. I made a ruddy bloomer. Can't think how it happened but I swopped two green envelopes from Oddy—expect he pinched them out of the orderly room—for a Royal Fusilier badge I picked up. Oddy is collecting badges fixes 'em on his bally belt. He's got so many there ain't room for more. Well, old sport, I must have put the letters in the wrong envelopes. So you got what I wrote to the Frenchie that was all jollyng-like and she got what I wrote to you which was the straight stuff—so help me pink. Wonder what she made of it and the squeezings and the cuddlings by the haystacks. She hasn't much English and what I writes to her and you got was what Billy Brown helped me out with, and he's picked up lots of the Frenchie *bat*, but it wouldn't be Billy if it was not all the hot stuff and love words that's his speciality.

That Frenchie ain't nothing to me, Dovey, so that's straight, and there ain't no call for you to take on so and ride your high horse. I only promised to send the Frenchie a letter as a souvenir as we was billeted in her farm, and I just wrote what Billy said the French words all being silly to me and then me making the mistake with the ruddy envelopes I had writ you a lovely letter, just what you was wanting, and what the doctor ordered and a whole page of kisses. Them wasn't for no Frenchie, so help me Gawd. She don't want no kisses from me the way she got them from Dinkie and Oddy and the Provost Sergeant and even old Joe Buck, with his wife and seven kids at home, gave her a peck or two. So you see you ain't no call to be snorty, 'cause I wasn't even one of the also rans, and if I hadn't played the giddy goat over those envelopes you wouldn't have written me and given me the chuck. I know what it is Dovey, Charlie telled me when he came back from "leaf," it's that blighter Dick Hutchins off the Transport been and cut me out. Him pretending to be a wounded hero, and swanking about the village. He ain't no wounded hero, it was only his horses taking fright,

when we was making a bit of road to the horse standings and he had his pair in a roller. A roller going over a man and breaking a rib or two ain't no wounded hero of the War. Why it might have happened to the silly juggins at home with his silly farm wagons. But I suppose you thinks it fine to be walking out with a bit of karki and don't take no count of his shamming to be bad when he ought to be back here doing his bit with the likes of us who is real heroes after our last fights and the Posh General saying he ain't ever seen a better body of men in his life. That's 'cause he didn't see Dick Hutchins, him being with you and put on the Transport because he couldn't walk better than a blind lobster seeing as how he had always tailed behind a plough. You can tell Dick Hutchins my girl that when I sets a mince on him he won't know what's hit him. He'll think forty ruddy rollers have passed over him. So just you be sensible like and don't turn down a good chap when you've got one. One as rides behind his Colonel into Battle with a led horse in one hand and a ruddy great sword in the other. You ask Chicken Tallboy about it. He's come out as a trumpeter and he's

sure to be writing to Mrs. Banister or Mrs. Mustard. These grown up page boys are such scholars nowadays.

Goodbye Dovey dear. You be just a sensible girl, that Frenchie ain't nothing to me. You just write and says it's all right. You don't want me to do anything rash when we are out Jerry killing do you? There's a duck just send me a letter that I can kiss and put under my pillow—that is if I ever see a pillow again.

Heres the best

From your truly loving faithful

JOCK.

What I heerd about Dick Hutchins fairly gives me the pip. He ain't no class for an upstanding girl like you.

\* \* \* \* \*

The force of circumstances necessitates a hiatus in the sequence of these very human documents. Amy Bailey considered it her duty to enter upon National Employment that took her away from Dragget, and in her absence her deputy made no real effort to maintain any continuity in the collection of

the village correspondence, and, naturally, was not instructed to forward to me an extra copy of any letters obtained. This sudden curtailing of the chief interest in my otherwise dreary existence was a profound grief to me. I had built up in my fancy such a pretty structure of the human sympathies that linked a Territorial Unit with its place of origin and its own particular native surroundings in the Mother Country. None of the figures on my fancy's stage were known to me, nor had I then, to my knowledge, ever been in the County wherein lay the charming village to which the letters were addressed. Yet from the one-way correspondence that had passed through my hands, the writers and recipients all seemed known intimately to me, and in my imagination to have become my friends. I felt that I could picture the surroundings with some accuracy. I could see old Fred Finch, the elderly huntsman, ably abetted by the versatile daughter of the absent Squire, keeping the Hunt going in spite of the many tribulations that were besetting them in that desperate period of the War. I could see that kindly busybody my cousin Amy Bailey until her sense of duty took her away

tramping up and down the Village, often as not in her mackintosh and goloshes, to collect and disseminate all the gossip she could glean, gossip for which the letters she had copied would in the main be responsible, unless she had heard from her maid-of-all-work that some one or other of the villagers was back home on leave or from hospital. I could picture the venerable Vicar, conservative to a fault, doing his daily rounds to bring comfort and cheering words to the lonely wives and anxious mothers of those splendid young men, no matter their station in life, in whose letters, whether polished or illiterate, I read that spirit of cheerfulness and almost joyful abandonment to their terrible duties, with no thought, and barely a mention, of the diabolical chances that might any moment make them what I am, a cripple for life. Charles, Jock, Billy, Joe Buck, Fly Alf, and even the imaginative George Stutt, they were, one and all, typical of a great people, that had only to be roused to prove to the world that they, as a race, were the salt of the earth. I am justified in saying this, since I have commanded these men both in success and adversity. There is little to choose between their bearing in either extreme.

My heart went out, in the tapestry I had woven, to the retiring pretty little Mrs. Melrose, hugging her small Milly to her heart, and shuddering every time the telegraph girl—it was a girl now—went past her gate. And to those splendid young women, future mothers of the Race, at whose hearts there was always the gnawing fear that they would never see their young husbands or sweethearts again. May, Joyce, Joan, Martha and Imogen, the pale little schoolmarm, who preferred the addresses of the handsome footman Charles to those of her pedantic superior, the schoolmaster, even though the latter was now disguised as an officer. They had all now become my friends. I felt I knew them intimately. If I shut my eyes, I could see the old Indian Judge, Sir Alexander, toddling down to smoke a cheroot with Mr. Agular, the retired banker, to see if the latter had had a weighty letter from his brilliant son on the Staff, and, if he hadn't, to share with him the latest news from Reggie, his own boisterously communicative son. What a canker was eating at each of these old men's hearts! Each had an only child at the War, and each prayed morning and night that their child might be spared

to them. Reggie was a special reality to me. The Army I knew could boast of many "Reggies." Thank God for that. They are a type that none but the British Race produces.

Pleasant hallucinations—were they hallucinations?—would bring before me the Reggie of a few short months before—Reggie the schoolboy home for the holidays, the constant companion of Frankie Dalgety, the Squire's motherless daughter. I could see them on their ponies scampering across the broad Parklands of Dragget Hall—mettlesome boy and sunny girl—or ferreting rats out of the hayricks with the urgent terriers held in leash; or, in the winter's afternoon, playing table-tennis or billiards, and quarrelling happily over the score. And now they had grown up. Had the big-hearted sporting girl no time, as she lay in her four-poster bed, or was she too weary after her strenuous day, to feel that womanly and agonizing apprehension that all was not well with her adored father and the companion of her girlhood, exposed to those terrible dangers, that multiply in the estimate with the shades of night?

❧ Poor girl, she suffered as all others of her sex suffered, whether installed in mansion or



in cottage. I could see her, fair-haired and rosy, flushed from a hot bath, tired beyond all expression, from a hard day with Fred Finch and the hounds, sitting in her *peignoir* in an arm-chair in front of a blazing fire, the poached eggs and hot toast going cold, the cup of tea untasted, her face buried in her hands, while she sobbed as if her heart would break. Yet she would join her stately aunt at dinner an hour later, as bright and cheerful as if there were no war, and as if the Squire's cheery voice had sounded through the hall: "Dinner, young people, dinner; the soup is getting cold."

Brave? Bravery was not the prescriptive right of those in the trenches alone! Was there not the simple and homely Mrs. Buck, with four of her younger children already in bed, and the three elder doing their school work at the kitchen table? Did not she, brave woman, as she sat in the grandfather's chair,—into which the Postman used to sink when he came in, dog-tired from his last round—for a few seconds' rest with her arms folded up in her apron, glance furtively and longingly at the Postman's cap and mackintosh cape hanging behind the door, and with

a sinking feeling in her heart, wonder if the glorious day would ever come when her husband would be able to use them again?

Then there was Farmer Loder, thickset and rubicund, himself now doing three men's work because George Stutt and Dick Hutchins and another of his farm hands had gone to the War. If it had not been for the work that came hard upon him at his time of life, he, too, surely, would be lonely. The big rambling farmhouse was terribly silent as it was. Jim his Benjamin was gone for ever. His two other sons were in constant jeopardy, and two of his bright and handy daughters were away as V.A.D.s. What of his quiet, kindly wife? She had withstood the first blow, with that restraint and fortitude in which those who feel most cloak their sorrow. She prayed daily, and devotedly every Sunday, that her great loss might be her only wrench. She tried to understand and attune herself to her robust husband's manly attitude towards the War.

"Dearie," I can hear him say, "I would have them all dead, and the girls too, rather than any man should point a finger at one of them and say, there goes that fellow Bassett,

who could fight and wouldn't. A man without ties and too cowardly to strike a blow for his own stake in his own country. You never knew my old father, dearie, but he would turn in his grave, if he thought that his country had need of a Loder and a Loder wasn't there."

This was the picture that I had pieced together to while away my weary and almost useless life. To me it was an enthralling theme, some parts of it terrible, but in the blending of the whole, beautiful. And I felt that it was a picture, if not an exact facsimile, yet very true to life. True of the unknown locality concerned, and true of the whole of my loved country, torn, racked, and yet exalted by this stupendous national upheaval.

Somehow I could not extend my canvas by my own imagination alone. I lacked the stimulant of the letters. Without them it seemed as if the picture were half done, and then in its unfinished state had been draped and pushed into a corner.

I have carefully avoided dates or anything that could localize the foundations that gave me my dreamland.

Nearly a year passed before my pigments returned to me. Amy Bailey was forced to relinquish the war-work that had taken her afield, and returned to Dragget, to be with her ailing sister. She had, immediately, reopened her quest for information from the Front, and my copies of the letters began to come to me again. I was burning to put new colours into my long-rested canvas. If I had known what those colours were to be, I might have left the painting as it was, and would have carried forward a much more pleasant phantasy.

## 27

*Second Lieutenant D. Delamain to Miss Frances Dalgery.*

DEAR FRANCES,—

Your very welcome and really interesting letter reached me only this morning. If you can remember the date upon which you wrote—you have not dated it yourself—you will realize from the indication above, that we have

been moving about and that we have covered some distance. This should explain many things to you. Anyway they have brought us back now to our old area of mud and desolation, in trains, which has forced two facts upon the limited perception that is allowed to soldiers in the field. The first of these is obvious to the meanest intelligences amongst us, namely that gone are the halcyon days of peace and comfort that we have been recently enjoying, and the second that our letters from home will not take so long to reach us. Which is about all that the censorship will permit me to say in the circumstances. You will doubtless understand, and even if I have transgressed the spirit of the law, I have kept inviolate the letter. I received the packet of books you sent me quite safely. Thank you for sending them. Your powers of selection are admirable, you seem to know by instinct the kind of book that appeals to me. I wonder how you find the time to attend to all the matters you do attend to, and to effect all the many kindnesses that I hear of from every side, and to carry on your correspondence with so many of us out here as well. You have certainly become the Fairy God-

mother to the Regiment, and it is quite the exception not to hear, in the course of conversation, "Miss Dalgety said so-and-so in her last letter to So-and-so, or we have to thank Miss Frankie for that." So another season is nearing its end. It is wonderful to me how you have been able to keep things going with poor old Finch incapacitated. Naturally, as you say, Walter Bassett was a great help to you—but Frances—those of us out here who know Walter Bassett don't think that he is a fit person to bask for one second in your favour. Please remember that I, also, am a "conscientious objector," but I hope that I have demonstrated that there is a wide difference between my attitude towards war and cowardice. Somehow, brave little lady that you are yourself, we, out here, cannot understand how you can even speak to him. But this is an impertinence on my part. Who am I that I should dare to upbraid you in the choice of your associates? What is even more incomprehensible to us is the means he employs to evade being conscripted. There must be some very weak vessels somewhere on the eliminating committees. Forgive my spleen, but we of our village feel very strongly on the

subject. Compare the case of Walsingham. He at least could have evaded the scorn of all sound men for all time that will be Bassett's, as with medals on his stole, every Sunday, he would have been able to impress upon his parishioners that he had played the man's part, and as far as his cloth would allow him, had "done his bit." But he felt honestly that the man-power question was becoming desperate, and that he would be serving both his God and his Country better as an officer than as a priest, and here he is out with us from a Cadet School, as gay a light cavalry subaltern, as so serious minded a cleric can ever hope to be. In the early days when he was a chaplain men were inclined to think that our late curate was a prig, now we know him to be a man, and a good man too. The men love him. Then there is the case of Plimsol, your chauffeur. I heard your father telling the story the other day. You probably know it: but I will risk repeating it as you may not have heard the sequel. When the Squire was mobilizing he asked Plimsol if he was joining up. Plimsol said that he was not. He was a conscientious objector—but from another angle. He was a Quaker and had been

brought up in an atmosphere that considered warfare a deadly sin. Then when the German cruisers shelled Yarmouth, Plimsol came to your father and said he wanted to join the Army. The Squire said "But I thought that you were a Quaker and had no use for soldiers?" Plimsol's answer was to my mind a classic. "I am a Quaker, sir, and all my people are Quakers, but no man shall ever say that when my country wanted men to defend it from invaders, that they had to fetch me against my will!" That is the spirit, Frances, that makes the winning of this war a certainty. And what of this Quaker, he was awarded the D.C.M. the other day. He is a lorry-driver in the A.S.C. but when the German Counter Battery work almost obliterated the personnel of our heavy Gunners, they called for volunteers from the Ammunition Column drivers to help man the Heavies. The Quaker—the conscientious objector—was the first man to step one pace forward. With such examples before us daily, is it surprising that we should resent Bassett having the privilege of your society, a privilege for which many of us are athirst—you must forgive the mixed metaphor—but, Frances, speaking on my own behalf



—the word is really athirst. What Reggie Sparling says about Bassett will not bear repetition. Is it not rather absurd Reggie is now a Captain, as Strangeways has gone to Tanks, and there are few better Captains in the Army. This War has a sobering effect upon us all. Captain Sparling has lost much of that devil-me-care abandon that was his temperament when he first joined us—and I was a Corporal in the Squadron. Major Akerman has I think been soured somewhat by the War. He went for a short period to be a G.S. learner and found that his duties amounted to those of a telephone girl. To a man of his outstanding mentality this proved too irksome to be borne. The Regular Army is not looking for genius from among its auxiliary ranks. It surmises that it can produce all it wants in that direction from within its own preserves—but it must have food for powder and plenty of that. This is what the amateur soldiers so conveniently supply. But this is very querulous. Perhaps when this is all over there will be no more Armies and Navies, and no more useless sacrifice of this wonderful organization that we call the human body and which the Great Designer of the

Universe fashioned after His own Image. How many among us ever give a thought that in our petty iconoclasms, we are committing the greatest blasphemy that our limited intelligences can imagine. We are daily, hourly employing the powers bestowed upon us in the unworthy and ungrateful occupation of mutilating and destroying the Great Designer's own Image, which He bestowed upon us to mark our superiority to the other wonders He had created. It is an awful thought. But there is one more awful and that is, in a few years' time, every village in England will flaunt the supreme blasphemy and raise monuments to those who have fallen under the heading "To the Glory of God and the Memory." It is to me too painful in the contemplation.

But, Frances, you will say that I have become maudlin. You can never realize how I hate it all, and somehow it eases the raw edges of my tattered conscience to be able to outpour some of my true feelings to you. I shall never forget, and if my destiny is such that I am to remain in France forever, I shall have treasured as my happiest recollection the ten days I spent with you when I was last in

beautiful England. There is nothing a man values more than a woman's sympathy. I would have said a "fighting" man. But God forbid that I should thus qualify myself. I am just a poor unwilling atom caught in this great maelstrom of Human Iniquity.

Good night and God bless you,  
Ever yours most sincerely,

DAVID DELAMAIN.

28

*Lieut.-Colonel J. J. Dalgety to Miss Frances Dalgety.*

DEAR FRANKIE,—

I haven't the courage to write you more than two lines. The blow has fallen. They are going to take our horses away, and turn us into a Cyclist Battalion. Cyclists, the most useless military formation that ever made caricatures of soldiers. I went to G.H.Q. and saw D. about it. He admits that all I had to say was true but their hands have been

forced by these cursed U-boats. They cannot get feed for enough horses to go round, and the guillotine has fallen upon us along with many others. My heart is broken.

You will sympathize with me more wholeheartedly than anybody else can. Of what use shall I be in a Ford car? Why unless I am on a horse I cannot think even.

Ever your heartbroken father

JOHN DALGETY.

P.S. You needn't worry about old Fred being permanently unfit. I'll be hunting hounds myself this winter. No Ford cars for me. Thank you. Horse-soldier or nothing. Anyway they cannot say I haven't "done my bit." I could fill the bill as long as I had a mounted unit—but with the passing of the horses, my capabilities as a soldier—if I have any—pass away too.

## 29

*From Private Jock Jaggers to Mr. Birkett (Stud Groom at Dragget Hall).*

DEAR MR. BIRKETT,—

Hopes this finds you as it leaves me, in fine health, but very dispirited. It's going round, so it must be true, as Jack Burge has heard the officers talking about it that we are going to be turned into worse than mud-crushers, that's cyclists. That is we is due to be what is all cyclists—excepting motor cyclists—the funny men of the Army. Ever seen a cyclist trying to go up hill in full marching order, with both tyres flat and like as not a dozen spokes gone crazy? Ever smelt a cyclist come in off a trek. You haven't, then you's lucky. You can think what I feels like as has the two best horses in France, looking fit enough to knock anything at the Agriculture Show. Me on a bike. Why that dud Dick Hutchins will have the laugh of the likes of us on bikes, he will, with his two Transport horses, as he thinks he knows how to look after. I ain't writ much to you Mr. Birkett because I ain't got much time, but I thought

you ought to know this awful calamity that is the worse thing that has happened to the British Army since the Battle of Waterloo. Here's the finest Cavalry Regiment in the whole Army, that has quite buried itself in what the papers calls laurels being put on mouldy bikes. It's just spite I says—or the work of some pro-Jerry who thinks if we is dismounted their friends over there may have a better chance of winning the war. They are very clever those pro-Jerrys they say, and have a lot of them that was German waiters afore the War with us dressed up as our blokes and no one can tell them apart. There has been a lot about it in orders. Well we realize it must be some of their doing, as no British General in his senses would ever put a fighting soldier on a bike. How the hell will he get over them shell holes. Carry his bike over I suppose and what about his rifle and Jerry shooting at him all the time. It's a fair knock-out and I thought as how you would like to know first hand as from the horses mouth.

Best respects to the Missus

From your old lad

JOCK JAGGERS.

(Bikedier).

## 30

*From Captain David Melrose to Mrs. Melrose.*

MY OWN DEAR LITTLE WIFE,—

I have very bad news for you, for us both. I shall not get my leave next week as I had hoped, there is some trouble down South, and all leave has been stopped. In fact I have had to recall all our people who were at home. But cheer up, dear one, matters down the line will doubtless clear up quickly enough and leave will open again. Anyway, whatever the cause may be, it is an ill wind that doesn't blow anyone any good. They have changed their mind about taking our horses away, and for the time being at least, we can rattle our spurs. I have written to the Bank about that matter, and there should not be any trouble in the future. They made a silly mistake. We are not the only Melroses in the world, and I am not the only one in the Army, by dozens. But I suppose Banks like everyone else are overworked and understaffed these days. We are back in a detestable country that we have been in before, and the Staff seem to have got the "wind up"

about the state of the defences—where there are any—so we are supplying working parties to repair them. They have been neglected so long that they are like an inverted widow's cruse, the more patching you do the more they want—or would new wine in old bottles be a better simile?

Every word you write me, darling, about our little Mill is treasured by me, even the fact that she pays me the compliment—or shall I say her sweet mother the insult—of pointing out every man in Khaki that she sees as her "Daddy." I'm afraid she won't know me when she does see me, especially if she is convinced that old Buck the Post Corporal is the correct Daddy. He is back again from leave, and told me, in the shyest and nicest way, all about you and little Mill. He knew what I was thirsting for. He has a heart of gold that man. Do anything you can to help Mrs. Buck and her profuse family if you can, and see if she wants for anything. But you will have to drag it out of her, she is not the type that whines and gives up trying. Just fancy little Mill being able to pick out some of her letters on the bricks. Don't force her—little minds should be allowed to develop slowly.



How utterly sweet her being so jealous of Meg's puppies. What an awful thing if she had thrown that one on the fire. It was a mercy that you came in in time to stop her. Of course at her age they don't realize any sort of consequences unless they burn their tiny little fingers in a flame or do something agonizing after that kind.

Well, buck up, old lady. We are at the last lap of this War. Americans pouring in by their thousands and making themselves into soldiers in the back areas. If we can keep a stiff upper lip until "the Fall" as they say, they will smother all that we have left of the Bosch. Sergeant Beasley brought a strange yarn up from the Base. He said that when the first contingent of Yanks landed on the Quay, they ran into a Labour Battalion doing some stevedoring. "We're over boys, to show you how to win the War," said the enthusiastic Yanks. The stevedores didn't take it, however, in the spirit it was said. "Oh are you," they answered, "well you can b—— well swim back to little ole New York and tell old Glory that we can win our own b—— war without you!" Thereupon the stevedores closed down upon our latest allies

and cast them into the sea. Unfortunately, with tragic results. So the Americans have had their first casualties in the War. It's a pity as there has been enough bad blood between the Allies at times as it is.

Ducat our present doctor has brought out quite a novel game of Patience with him when he came back from leave last week. It is not really a Patience, it is a game for two. They are all crazy about it in the H.Q. Mess and the C.O. who is a slow card merchant loses about 100 francs a night at it, and stands everybody in sight a drink if he wins 5 francs. I think it's his way of helping some of the poorer members of the Mess, since he doesn't really play a bad hand at Bridge.

I don't think I told you about Corporal Peck's last effort. He, you will remember, is the Doctor's orderly. He was, when the R.A.M.C. shoved him on to us, just a raw youth out of a fruit shop in Covent Garden: but he has served our succession of Medicos faithfully and well. He is a youth of tremendous self-confidence. As you probably know when we are billeted in a French village it is the understood thing that our medical officer is available if any of the French families

want professional assistance. Ducat had a confinement imminent, so he told Corporal Peck to be on the *qui vive*. The other night about 10 o'clock while we were all playing Patience or Bridge, the Corporal appeared in the doorway and saluting gravely said to Ducat: "Confinement all correct, sir, Twins. I've done all that was necessary. Mother and Infants doing well—boys!" The Corporal had taken charge himself. You can't beat the British soldier when he's a Cockney. The Squire was tickled to death, so that this morning when an intimation came in from the Corps that there was a foreign decoration available for one of our rank and file, he immediately made me put the Doctor's orderly in for it. Well, Milly Sweetheart, I have had a lovely chat with you to-night. Let us hope that the present scare will blow over in a few days, and then—then, my darling, we shall be together again. It almost makes me tread on air to think of it. I can see myself, tossing our little Mill to the ceiling, and I can almost hear her infectious peals of laughter. God preserve you both, and take care of you—and of me also, so that we may soon look back upon this cruel separation as some horrible nightmare never,

never to be experienced again. *Tout-à-toi* and such a loving embrace, which you are to pass on to our dear little pickle of a daughter.

Good-night darling,  
Ever your truly loving husband,  
DAVE.

## 31

*From Major (acting Lieut.-Colonel) Akerman to  
Miss Dalgety.*

MY DEAR MISS DALGETY,—

I am afraid that the fatal W.O. telegram will have acquainted you with the terrible purport of my letter. Your very gallant father and our much beloved Colonel was killed, just at the moment when his magnificent effort had achieved the object that he had set himself and the Regiment to accomplish. I am afraid that nothing I can say can for the moment alleviate yours and Miss Dalgety's grief. But if it can be any solace to you, the end was merciful and instantaneous. An

enemy shell practically destroyed the entire Regimental Headquarters. It killed your father, Major Steyning the second in command, poor Melrose, the Adjutant, and quite a number of the rank and file. Never was there a more unfortunate missile exploded. It was on the second day of the desperate fighting in which we had been engaged, and before the crowning disaster fell upon us we had lost 60 per cent. of the Regiment. But, Miss Dalgety, and you must take courage from this, whatever our losses, we had held the enemy, when all appeared to be lost, and it was your dear father's dogged courage that inspired us all to accomplish what repeatedly appeared to us to be the impossible. To him alone is the credit. I would willingly be myself in the grave in which we buried him, if he could be alive to realize what his steadfast example has done for England. For ourselves we are like a ship without a rudder. I am so dazed by this awful calamity and the unwished for responsibilities that our irreparable losses have thrust upon me, that I hardly know what to say or how to say it. But I assure you Miss Dalgety, you and your aunt have the most heartfelt sympathy in this terrible tragedy, which has overtaken

us all, of myself and each of my officers and other ranks who survive.

Believe me my heart is full to the breaking,  
Yours most sincerely,

ROGER AKERMAN.

P.S. We will arrange for all the Colonel's things to be sent to you. Alas, poor Reggie Sparling, a most steadfast ally of yours has gone too. Gallant to the end. Gallant beyond parallel.

[A note was taken of Colonel Akerman's letters to Mrs. Melrose and Sir Alexander Sparling. They are in the same strain as the one given above and it seems unnecessary to my canvas to include their harrowing contents.]

## 32

*Post-Corporal Joe Buck to Mrs. Buck.*

DEAR CARRIE,—

I has escaped God knows why. We have had an awful time, the whole Regiment's blotted out. The Squire, the Adjutant, Master Reggie, young Pedlar and nearly all the other officers killed and them as is not killed wounded. All our lads from the village taken it in the neck poor fellows. Dan Sabey, Charlie Collins, Jack Burge, Billy Browne, George Stutt and dear old Alf Amos all gone. There's only me and Dick Hutchins, him's on the Transport, left. It's too awful to think about, and the Squire too. I cannot believe it yet. Why does the Good Lord take the best and leave the useless ones like me. This is just to let you know, old girl, that I'm orl-right. Poor Miss Frankie, poor little Mrs. Melrose whatever will they do.

Ever your old JOE.

## 33

*Post-Corporal Joe Buck to Miss Frances Dalgety.*

DEAR MISS FRANKIE,—

Your old Joe's heart bleeds for you. There never was no man like the Squire and there never can be again and poor Master Freddy too. Miss Frankie I am crying. Excuse me.  
JOE BUCK.

## 34

*Post-Corporal Joe Buck to Mrs. Melrose.*

MADAM,—

Forgive an old man, as has served you these many years, but my heart bleeds for you. There was no finer gentleman than the Adjutant in the Regiment excepting the Squire, and him gone too. But we of the village is clean wiped out and there is none left to tell you what we in the ranks think and feel about it but the old postman

Excuse me  
JOE BUCK.



## 35

*From Second Lieutenant W. Walsingham to Rev.  
Hubert Birtwistle.*

MY DEAR VICAR,—

I will try and pull myself together and give you some details of this cataclysm of War that has shattered our home here, that was the Regiment, and has spread desolation broadcast through your Parish—our Parish I should say because, though I have taken on a layman's task my heart is still with you in our lovely valley. I have of course written to Miss Dalgety, Lady Sparling, and Mrs. Melrose. What difficult letters they were to write but before I pen similar letters to Mrs. Sabey and Mrs. Amos, and many others not of our own village, that I must write to, it would ease my mental distraction if I tried to give you such detail as I have been able to gather of this terrible business. Myself—can I say fortunately—I was not with the Regiment on the fatal three days. I was detached with my troop for special duty with the H.Q. of an Infantry Division. We had very hard work during the crisis of the battle, but by

the Grace of God I had no casualties. The G.O.C. the Division was kind enough to say that my men had been of great service to him in message carrying when all inter-communication between his units had been destroyed by the terrific artillery preparation that heralded the enemy's onslaught. We are now in a back area, a mere handful—170 of all ranks to be precise—to refit, be filled up and to organize, under Colonel Akerman, who at present is the C.O. We are under him, one Major, two Captains, and four Subalterns, including myself and Delamain, the latter is doing acting adjutant. All the rest of the 24 officers with us on the fatal days are either killed, wounded or missing.

The story as I am able to piece it together is that when the big attack by the enemy began in the early hours of a misty morning, the Regiment was sent up to hold what was expected to be a reserve line. When the Colonel reached his objective and had just got two squadrons into position, dismounted of course, it was trench fighting—he found that instead of his line being a third line it was already the front line and the enemy were attacking in mass. The original defence had been broken

through, and through some infamous staff blunder infantry detailed for the Battle Zone had not arrived in position. The Regiment alone, except for such of the broken troops that could be rallied, had to take the brunt of the German advance. They held up the attack for twelve mortal hours before support that should have been there at daybreak reached them. The casualties were heavy, but every man fought like a hero, and the barrels of rifles and hotchkisses almost melted. Unsupported either by artillery or infantry, attacked without intermission and with every rifle in the line including grooms and batmen, the horses ringed with only slightly wounded men to tend them, or turned loose or broken away, this thin line of cavalrymen fought on all day, and never gave a yard unless it was taken over their dead bodies by the attacking hordes. In the evening some support came. But it only came in dribblets and the Regiment, or what was left of it, could not be withdrawn. Troops cannot be withdrawn in battle.

During the night fresh infantry was marched up properly, but the Boche had forced back the Corps on the Regiment's left, and were working round. It was on the following

morning while the C.O. was directing his part of the withdrawal, that the fatal shell found him. He, Melrose and Steyning, our second in command were killed instantaneously. Poor Reggie Sparling and Pedlar were killed on the previous afternoon. Reggie while leading his troop in a desperate counter-attack, to re-establish a bit of the line he had lost, Pedlar, who was doing liaison for the C.O. while carrying a message to Major Greenshields. How and when all the others from the village were killed it is hard to say with accuracy. They were all killed in the line, some by shell fire, others in counter-attacks, or by bullets that found them at their posts. On the one hand it is a dismal story, on the other it is the history of a grim endurance against impossible odds that must ever live as an epic. The Corps Commander visited us this morning and he told the Parade that we did not know what we had accomplished and he made a most touching reference to the Squire. He said that when the War was over and he looked back on all the comrades he had lost, that the figure of his gallant friend our Colonel would place all other heroes of the War in a dim light. Of the Regiment

he said that every Regiment had made some great record in its history, but that not any of the great Regiments that had made history in the Peninsular or Waterloo Campaigns, had rendered their country a greater service in the hour of its need than we had in that desperate battle. Oh, but the price? If only the Squire could have been there to have heard this meed of grateful praise presented by the man most concerned!

Alas they had buried him five days before, with the gentle but fine Melrose, and the silent Steyning in one grave at the roadside, a few yards from the great shell hole that marked the spot where he had died.

If it were not that we were so short handed, and there was so much for us to do, I don't think I could stand it. We are all stunned and cannot yet realize that we are never to see the Squire again, or hear his voice raised in cheery praise or in anger real or assumed. Major Akerman, I should say Colonel, now, published a most noble order about our dear dead Chief when he assumed command.

Dear Vicar, though you never upbraided me, yet I could feel from your letters, that you never really approved of the step that I

took when I doffed my priest's habit, yet I cannot ever regret that I am a part—and thank God still a living part—of this great Regiment. It is sad almost past enduring, that I shall never hear Reggie Sparling's ringing laugh again, or smile at Melrose's quiet cynicisms and epigrams, but think of the privilege it is to a man to have associated with these heroes, to be part and parcel of the unit that they in their self-sacrifice led to such great distinction. Will you, if you are willing, show this letter to Sir Alexander. It may help him in his great trouble to know how loved his son was by all, and how nobly he died.

With my most affectionate remembrances to your dear wife, and all the devotion that is due to you from me

I remain

Yours devotedly,

WALTER WALSINGHAM.

## 36

*Lieutenant David Delamain to Miss Dalgety.*

DEAR FRANCES,—

This is the longer letter that I promised that I would write you when I sent you my first sad message after the catastrophe. I will say no more about your dear Father. You, I know, realize how I feel about him, how we all feel about the irretrievable loss we have sustained. But I want to tell you a few words about Reggie—all said and done Reggie was almost a brother to you, and you were both blessed with very similar sunny natures, that make people adorable to their fellows. During the battle Reggie and I held adjoining trenches. During the earlier part of the fighting I had frequent messages from him, but of course later in the day we became too attenuated for much inter-message sending. We became little disjointed groups of trench line—save the mark!—in which a few desperate men were being slowly exterminated. The last message that came to me from Reggie was about 3 in the afternoon. A dirty and cordite begrimed Berserker, as Reggie loved to call

the men of his troop, came to me, running the gauntlet of the enemy's fire as he crossed the intervening country between us. The verbal message was grisly and laconic—"Line to be held to the last man—no withdrawal," and this gallant messenger, Trooper Evans it was, he has miraculously survived, had dragged with him a sack of ammunition for us, and badly we wanted it as we were already using the clips we could collect from our own dead and wounded. Reggie was killed late in the afternoon. The enemy had bombed his men out of half his trench line. Sergeant Simms, who brought the four survivors of the Troop out, told me that he collected six men of which the Sergeant was one, and re-established the last bit of line although there were about 40 Boche in it. In the moment of this success he was shot through the head by a German officer who, as gallant as Reggie's Berserkers, refused to give way.

It is awful to contemplate, but his men were so enraged at the loss of their loved subaltern that they became murderers and avenging devils. Reggie Sparling, the friend of your childhood, the boy that I have seen growing up since he was a little thing in knickerbockers, died



not only while he was doing great things, but when he had accomplished what men would have said was the impossible. The piece of trench he thus defended, with his handful of men, was the fulcrum of the whole defence. It was the rock upon which the apex of the Bosch attacks split; so that we on the flanks could deal with the diverted overflow.

Frances, you, and perhaps you alone, can realize what this all means to me. It is to you, in those moments, when reticence has become a gnawing anguish, that I have laid bare my feelings. Yet I am only human, the frenzy of the brute beast has conquered even my well schooled mind. In those hectic hours, when a solitary rifleman might turn the scale, I have seized a dead comrade's weapon and destroyed my fellow men. I say it now with infinite pain, even exultingly I destroyed them looking into their faces the while. I have in my troop a Jew called Rosenheim, he is said to be the best shot in the Regiment. The men call him "Shylock" and he wears a diamond ring on his finger. During one of the lulls in the assaults, I found myself beside this "Shylock." He was grimly smiling, as he counted some marks he had scratched on the

stock of his rifle with the diamond in his ring. I knew by instinct what his occupation was. "What is the Tally, Rosenheim?" I asked. "Twenty-seven certainties, Sir," he replied, gloatingly patting his oil oozing piece, "and about forty probables." And my answer was "Stout fellow!" and even when I peered over the parapet and saw the holocaust of limp figures in grey that carpeted the *glacis* before us, some motionless for ever, others writhing in the agony of their hurts, I, the pacifist, felt no pang of remorse, only an exquisite exultation that we had asserted our superiority over those whose fixed intention it had been to destroy us. The reaction would doubtless have come later, only Major Akerman has made me his Adjutant, and in the circumstances, I have not a moment to myself in which to moralize. We have a now famous Regiment to rebuild. They can never fill us up with material of the same quality as that we have lost. But the leaven that we have left is the finest in the world,—you see I cannot get away from brutal exultation in this sacrilegious human backsliding that is War—it should leaven the new unity when it is composed, and as you know Major Akerman is a soldier of even

more than exceptional ability. He has not, and never can have the personality and flair of your dear father but he has the capacity to command the great Regiment that your father made.

Frances, when you feel yourself able, could you write me a little letter. A letter, with nothing in it about the War. Perhaps you would describe to me the little nothings about the Village and the Kennels, and a few words about my birds, and your dogs and horses. Just quiet peaceful matters. These are the things for which my mind aches and my spirit yearns.

God bless you, dear Frances, and help your brave little heart in this heartrending trouble.

Believe me to be always

Yours most sincerely,

DAVID DELAMAIN.

P.S. You will realize shortly that you have inherited great responsibilities with your father's estate. I do not know how you are placed in the matter of advice and help in the business aspect of your future life. I am not inexperienced in affairs, so that if at any time, you wish for any advice or aid, and do not

quite know where to turn for it, you have only to command me and I will be your ready servant in any capacity.

This was the last pigment that came to me to paint into the grim red sunset of my canvas. Just about this period my wounds began to give trouble and I had to go back into hospital to suffer again those agonies that, alas, have proved recurring to so many of us who went into the Great Adventure full of their young manhood in 1914 and were unfortunate enough to fall by the way.

But I took my picture with me. Pathetically enough, it seemed to be complete. A complete particle of the great national Tragedy that had engulfed us. It may have been a picture executed with the remorseless technique that debases the art of that pitiless Master—War—but it was nevertheless a great comfort to me as I lay on my narrow bed, and the contemplation of it took something of the edge off the terrible moments of anticipation when the hour was approaching for the changing of the dressings on my injured body.

Two years after the war was over, and when I was as fit as a man can be, who is condemned

for life to a wheeled chair, I read in *The Times* a paragraph that set every nerve in my body tingling. It ran:

A marriage has been arranged and will shortly take place between David Delamain, M.C., of "The Grange," Dragget, and Frances Mary Dalgety, only child of the late Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Dalgety, D.S.O., M.F.H., J.P., of Dragget Hall, Dragget.

I could hardly bear the excitement of it and the whole of my picture stood out before me again, and it seemed that at the eleventh hour some great artist—an artist greater than the terrible one that had put in the last shades—had taken his brush, and with incredible skill had changed what had been a murky sunset into a brilliant dawn.

A new resolution seized me, gave me for the time being a real interest in life. I would make every endeavour to be present at this wedding if it were celebrated, as I hoped it would be, in Dragget Village Church. I would then see in the life some of those with whom I had lived in my imagination for so many months and whose loves and cares and daily life I seemed to have shared. I felt certain

that the wedding would find most of them that had survived within a prettily decorated village church. I scanned the papers for every notice and at last to my joy I found it.

It was a beautiful May day, and my man took me down by train to Dragget Village. It meant an early start, but it was worth it. Some subtle instinct must have prompted my imagination for the village of Dragget was exactly as I had imagined that it would be. It lay along the trace of a trout stream in a lovely valley in the folds of glorious Downlands. I was wheeled to the little old-world Church, about a quarter of an hour before the appointed time. Already it was packed. The verger was talking in the porch to a ruddy-faced man, well greased as to his hair, and obviously dressed in his Sunday best. It was not necessary to observe the string of medals on his waistcoat to realize that he was an old soldier. No doubt he was a trusted sidesman.

"Bride or bridegroom?" he asked cheerily.

"Both," I answered, truthfully enough.

He looked at me quizzically for a moment and then the charity of comradeship arose within him.

"I know the place for you, Sir. I will find

you a spot just below the pulpit. You will then have the best place in the church," and he bade my man follow him.

As I was pushed in under the wealth of wonderful blooms he said, "You will do splendidly there, Sir, and your man can stand back out of the way. We are proud to welcome soldiers in this village, Sir!" He was about to hurry off, but I stopped him.

"You are Joe Buck, if I am not mistaken?"

His honest face beamed.

"Yes, Sir. Joe Buck, the Postman. I held Miss Frankie in my arms, when she wasn't more than a week old!"

I now had time to observe the congregation. I knew that the Church must be full of those phantom friends of mine and instinctively I felt that I should find them. Old Fred Finch was obvious in the Hunt uniform and his spotless white breeches and shining leathers. He was, however, very aged and feeble. My eye ran down the line of pews. I seemed to recognize many of the occupants. The tall grey-bearded man of sad but placid countenance, that would be Sir Alexander Sparling, and the sweet lady beside him, Lady Sparling. Reggie's parents—how their hearts must have

been wrung this day. Beside them, the stout prosperous-looking man was doubtless Mr. Agular the Banker. The little lady behind them, sadly beautiful in the black that told of her estate, could be none other than Mrs. Melrose, to whom her lost husband had written those letters brimming over with love and devotion. Poor woman, how this gathering must have pained her. I fell to wondering where her bright little Milly—her all in life—might now be. Then my eye ranged back. I knew I had now found the servants from the Hall. Mr. Banister, the dignified Butler, whose dress and carriage would not have disgraced a Cabinet Minister. Beside him that stout motherly person in rustling silk could be none other than Mrs. Mustard. Ranged beside them was a bevy of excited girls, no doubt, unless some of them had married, there were amongst them the inamoratas of those fine lads—long since destroyed,—inamoratas who had been familiar to me as Dovey, Joyce and Joan. Then on the other side of the nave was a stocky rubicund farmer. This could be none other than Mr. Loder, the father of the luckless Jim. I liked to think that his other two sons had been spared to



him, as two fine-looking young men were in the pew with him, with his wife and two bright girls, obviously the V.A.D. daughters.

My attention is now distracted. The Bridegroom with his best man have entered and have taken a sort of position near me: but the Bridegroom has many people in the forefront of the congregation who wish speech with him. This gave to me the opportunity for a searching scrutiny. The hero of the occasion is the David Delamain of my imagination. He is tall, spare, and has an open, kindly face, a face now wreathed in the expression of happy anticipation. If fate had decreed that I had been the father of a tender daughter, Delamain's was the face of a man to whom willingly I would have entrusted her. The best man puzzled me. Obviously he had been a soldier, was he a brother officer of the bridegroom, or was he Major Agular, son of the retired Banker across the way, the Staff Officer whose letters I had read and had found remarkable for their wise restraint? I could not make up my mind, and then the organ began to play. I could not see the organist but I feel it was Imogen, the little schoolmistress. Were the strains of glorious music she was now playing,

conjuring up for her a sad memory of her lost Charles Collins, or had she found consolation with the return of the schoolmaster—a bronzed and bemedalled officer? Or, was he too gone, and was her only solace her music and her memories?

The vestry door opens. The choir boys and men slowly march down the aisle. The grey-headed Vicar brings up the rear. There is no ambiguity in placing him. He is preceded by a clean-looking priest with a military cross and medals shining on his vestments. This is Walsingham without doubt. Walsingham with his sword for ever sheathed, and returned to the priesthood and the cure of souls.

And now the procession turns back again. The organ crashes out the march and I am to see the Bride. The understanding, beautiful and sympathetic pivot upon which all my day-dreams have turned. My instinctive perception has played me no trick. In her wedding dress Frankie is nothing short of divine. I hold my breath. I catch a full-faced glimpse of a beautiful fair-haired girl with eyes of wondrous blue. It is the face that has been with me for many weary months.

One tiny little maiden follows her with pattering steps, toying with her train. I now know where little Milly is. I can see her mother's proud smile, as she tenderly directs the tiny mite with her gloved hand as the child passes the pew. Poor, happy not-understanding little Milly, your gallant father is never again to toss you to the ceiling and revel in the boisterous merriment of your infectious laugh. I did not see upon whose arm the Bride's hand rested. But it was a soldier too—Colonel Akerman perhaps? I cannot say; but probably it was so. This ceremony was more than a village wedding—it was a Regimental affair, and as the sounds of the organ subsided, I felt that there were more than the living with us in the sacred edifice. The spirit of the beloved Squire, and those of his inimitable retinue of officers and dauntless men, seemed to me to have come back from the other side and to pervade the Church.

It must be admitted that I did not follow the service. I was living again those tremendous incidents that had brought such changes into, and left such dreadful gaps in, our lives.

It is over, David Delamain and my Frances

are man and wife. They pass together into the vestry. The whole congregation is stirring. The Bride and Bridegroom return again. For one moment Frances—the Frances of my dreams—permits her beautiful blue eyes to rest upon me. Her whole sweet, tender nature is concentrated in one kindly glance. She disengages her hand from her husband's arm, and stepping lightly to my chair, she places her bridal bouquet on my palsied knees. It is the tribute of her sweet compassionate heart to a poor soldier broken in the Wars!

\* \* \* \* \*

My picture is complete. It is beautiful. It is Dawn after the Storm.

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